DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 473 662 CE 084 472

AUTHOR	Hazell, Pat
TITLE	And Then There Was One: Investigating ARIS, the Victorian Adult Education and Resource Information Service.
SPONS AGENCY	Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane.
ISBN	ISBN-0-868039-41-1
PUB DATE	2002-06-00
NOTE	58p.; ALNARC National Research Program, 2001-2002. Produced by the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.staff.vu.edu.au/alnarc/publications/02Hazell.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Historical Materials (060) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Community Needs; Developed Nations; *Educational Resources; Educational Trends; Foreign Countries; *Information Centers; Information Services; Information Sources; *Literacy Education; *Numeracy; Organizational Change; Postsecondary Education; Professional Development; Workplace Literacy
IDENTIFIERS	Australia (Victoria); *Institutional History

ABSTRACT

The field of adult literacy and numeracy provision in Australia has developed and grown over the past 20 years. From a focus on student-centered learning and meeting community needs, it has evolved into a multi-faceted field incorporating community, technical and further education institutional, and workplace provision. Through ebbs and flows of politics and pedagogies, sites of delivery, and changing practitioner perspectives, the field has needed and provided itself support mechanisms. The Victorian Adult Education and Resource Information Service (ARIS) continues to thrive as a support service. It has an active and valued presence in its own state, through its resources and information services, professional development initiatives, and involvement in curriculum development, advisory, and project work. Resourcing and information services are carried out at a national level. Internationally, ARIS has a presence at adult literacy and numeracy conferences and draws on a range of international material. Despite limited funding, leading to constraints on time and staffing, it has been able to prioritize tasks and select and develop areas of strength. ARIS is aware of trends and shifts in the field and has responded to them. Constraints and challenges are the broad political situation, its identity, broadening responsibility, and funding. Needs of the adult literacy and numeracy field include more support than ARIS can provide, keeping and making accessible a resource collection, and adequate professional support. (Appendixes include 31 references, 9 Internet sites, and interview protocol.) (YLB)

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ALNARC

And then there was one

Investigating ARIS, the Victorian Adult Education and Resource Information Service

Pat Hazell

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University of Technology, Sydney

ALNARC National Research Program 2001-2002

June 2002

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ISBN: 0 868039 40 3 (hard copy)

ISBN: 0 868039 41 1 (web version)

Enquiries about this project should be addressed to:

Dr Betty Johnston

University of technology, Sydney

betty.johnston@uts.edu.au

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The research in this report was funded under the ANTA Adult Literacy National Project by the Commonwealth of Australia through the Department of Education, Science and Training.

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Commonwealth of Australia

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their assistance in this research:

Steve Black
Cinthia Del Grosso
Diane Dell
Peter De Natris
Daryl Evans
Jan Hagston
Robyn Hodge
Robin Kenrick
Betty Johnston
Rosa McKenna
Philippa McLean
Jean Searle
Jim Thompson
Dave Tout
Louise Wignall

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AAAE	Australian Association of Education
ACAL	Australian Council of Adult Literacy
ACE	Adult and Community Education
ACER	Australian Centre for Education Research
ACFE	Adult Community and Further Education
ACTRAC	Australian Committee for Training Curriculum
ALAC	Adult Literacy Action Campaign
ALBE	Adult Literacy and Basic Education
ALIO	Adult Literacy Information Office
ALLP	Australia's Language and Literacy Policy
ALNARC	Adult Literacy and Numeracy Australian Research Consortium
ALRN	Adult Literacy Research Network
ALT	Adult Literacy Teaching
AMEP	Adult Migrant English Program
AMES	Adult Migrant Education Service
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ARIS	Adult Education Research and Information Service
CAE	Centre for Adult Education (previously Council for Adult Education)
CBT	Competency Based Training
CELL	Certificate in English Language and Literacy
CGEA	Certificates of General Education for Adults
CSWE	Certificates of Spoken and Written English
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DFE	Department of Further Education
ESL	English as a Second Language
ILY	International Literacy Year
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Board
LANT	Literacy and Numeracy Teaching
LLNP	Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program
LOTE	Languages Other Than English
MCEETYA	Ministers for Commonwealth Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NLIA	National Language Institute of Australia
NLLIA	National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia
NPL	National Policy on Languages
NRS	National Reporting System
OETTE	Office of Education, Training and Tertiary Education
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VALBEC	Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council
VALC	Victorian Adult Literacy Council
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WELL	Workplace English Language and Literacy

Executive summary

The first of the four questions that the national ALNARC workplan for 2001-2002 sought to address was:

- What does the past tell us about adult literacy and numeracy policy, provision and research?

This project provides one small answer to that question, by examining the Victorian Adult Education and Resource Information Service (ARIS), which has operated as a professional support organisation to the field of adult literacy and numeracy for more than ten years.

The field of adult literacy and numeracy provision in Australia has developed and grown over the past 20 years. From a focus on student-centred learning and meeting the needs of the community, it has evolved into a multi-faceted field incorporating community, TAFE institutional and workplace provision. Through the ebbs and flows of politics and pedagogies, sites of delivery and changing practitioner perspectives, the field has needed and provided for itself, mechanisms for support. There are two mechanisms in particular that have developed: professional associations and information services.

The purpose of this research was to examine ARIS as an organisation providing a support service to the literacy and numeracy field; to consider factors that influence its role, effectiveness and sustainability, in order to look ahead and consider how the ARIS experience may offer insights into ways that the support needs of the literacy and numeracy field might be met in the future.

What has been learnt from the ARIS experience?

The story of ARIS is a success story, not least because it survives. Unlike similar support organisations in other states, it continues to thrive. It has an active and valued presence in its own state, through its resources and information services, through its professional development initiatives, through its involvement in curriculum development, advisory and project work. At a national level, not all these functions can be carried out from a small centre in one state, but many can be and are: certainly the resourcing and information services are well known and used around Australia. Even professional development is sought from and delivered to organisations in other states experiencing a dearth of offerings. Internationally, ARIS has a presence at adult literacy and numeracy conferences, and itself draws on a range of international material.

In spite of funding constraints, leading in turn to constraints on time and staffing, it has been able to prioritise its tasks, and to select and develop its areas of strength. It has kept its ear to the ground, it has been aware of trends and shifts in the field, it has responded to them. What it does, it does very well, and it knows it cannot do everything.

One central reason for its success is undoubtedly the determination and persistence of Hagston and Tout, who have been involved throughout the lifetime of ARIS. They have exhibited soundness in their educational approaches and leadership in the field of adult literacy and numeracy delivery. Their determination has seen ARIS survive the funding roller coaster, as well as survive damaging differences in opinions about the fundamental direction ARIS should take.

But ARIS has done much more than just survive. It is acknowledged by all to have provided a vital service to the adult literacy and numeracy field, within the constraints of its operation

Constraints and challenges

Pictures of success are never simple. Through the process of investigation, layers of complexity become evident.

- *The broad political situation*: The different directions of the national training agenda and the Victorian state education agenda are detailed in this report. One outcome of Victorian policy factors, including the directions set by the ACFE Act, is that ARIS has been left to one side of national developments, which have been rapid and far-reaching, radically changing the work of practitioners in the adult literacy and numeracy field. Huge programs such as WELL and LANT/LLNT are responses to the federal government's VET direction, and although involved in the LANT/LLNP program, ARIS is otherwise almost absent in VET.
- *ARIS identity*: ARIS is funded by ACFE, but early in its existence it formed an alliance with Language Australia. Questions therefore arise about whether it is a state service or a national service. As a state service, ARIS finds itself pulled in some new directions by its funding body, which has moved ARIS from an adult literacy and basic education focus into the more general area of adult education. Language Australia has pulled ARIS in a national direction, and this is something ARIS has welcomed. However, ARIS does not have the funding or staff to adequately provide a national service. While these key relationships both offer a wealth of useful directions, they also provide tensions.
- *Broadening responsibility*: A further related issue is that ARIS identity has been closely linked to Hagston and Tout, though this is something of which they are aware and which the new team, which includes Hodge, is working to overcome.
- *Funding*: Operating without adequate funding, sufficient staff or enough time, means that ARIS is forced to be reactive rather than proactive in much of what it does. Staff need to be able to stand to one side and ask themselves about the scope of the job they want to do, about who should be the users, and about where they want to position themselves in the future.

What are the future needs of the adult literacy and numeracy field for professional support?

The driving question for this research concerns the support needs for the adult literacy and numeracy field in the years ahead. There is no doubt that a multifaceted field exists, that it is trying to find a new direction, and that it does need support. This report highlights some of the needs of the adult literacy and numeracy field, and uncovers some suggestions.

- The research has shown that ARIS continues to meet a range of needs in the field. It provides quality services that have become increasingly valuable as other sources of information and professional development have diminished in most states.
- The research has also shown that the adult literacy and numeracy field needs more support than ARIS can provide. ARIS cannot be all things to all people without substantially more resourcing. Interviewees have identified areas where support services are needed, demonstrating that a wide range of people are still in need of such support. They include new providers in the field, sessional and poorly paid practitioners, and people working in new ways, in new sites or on new modes of delivery. They include people in other states and territories, including rural or remote areas, such as the Northern Territory. In particular, support for literacy and numeracy in Training Packages, and in VET more generally, is clearly a priority. Whether such a service is to be limited to the adult literacy

and numeracy field, or whether it should extend in more directions, remains a question for further debate.

- The role of keeping, and making accessible, a resource collection, which includes a comprehensive database, is crucial.
- There is clear evidence that the scope of the field's need for support is national. An adequately funded mechanism is required to provide such a service, by whatever means it is delivered. Questions need to be asked about the responsibility of a national training agenda to provide a national system of professional support.

This research has demonstrated the ongoing need for adequate professional support for the adult literacy and numeracy field. The vital issues of what shape this support should take, what funding it should have, and where responsibility for funding lies, remain.

Section 1: Rationale, research description and methodology

1.1 Rationale

The field of adult literacy and numeracy provision in Australia has developed and grown over the past 20 years. From a focus on student-centred learning and meeting the needs of the community, it has evolved into a multi-faceted field incorporating community, TAFE institutional and workplace provision. Much provision is offered by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) using a range of curricula that support Vocational Education and Training* (VET) in schools, TAFE and workplaces. More recently, adult literacy and numeracy provision by the welfare sector has increased. Therefore, 'the field' can currently be described as having three aspects of provision: VET and TAFE; the community sector; and the welfare sector.

Literacy and numeracy provision in Australia has provided, and continues to provide, models of good practice which are acknowledged internationally. During the changes that have occurred in the past twenty years, the literacy and numeracy field has at times led with confidence and commitment and influenced changes that impact on the work it does. At other times it has had change imposed on it by outside imperatives. Through the ebbs and flows of politics and pedagogies, sites of delivery and changing practitioner perspectives, the field has needed and provided for itself, mechanisms for support. There are two mechanisms in particular that have developed: professional associations and information services.

Professional associations take the form of a national council, the Australian Council for Adult Literacy (ACAL) and affiliate state councils, which support the field though the work of volunteer executive members and varying, but inevitably small, government funding; or no funding at all. The second mechanism has been a number of state-based information and resource services, funded and operated in a variety of ways according to local state and territory arrangements.

Information and resource organisations around Australia have not fared well since the withdrawl of commonwealth funding. Most spectacularly, and most recently, was the demise in 1999 of the first, longest running and highly respected Adult Literacy Information Office (ALIO) in NSW (Johnston & Kelly, 2002). Now only one remains: the Victorian organisation, the Adult Education Resource and Information Service, ARIS. (Appendix 1 provides brief histories of a sample of adult literacy information services that have existed in Australia: New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland).

The purpose of this research is to examine ARIS as an organisation that continues to provide a support service to the literacy and numeracy field; to consider factors that influence its role, effectiveness and sustainability, in order to look ahead and consider how the ARIS experience may offer insights into ways that the support needs of the literacy and numeracy field might be met in the future.

The issue of support for the literacy and numeracy field in Australia remains problematic. In this field, what should the role of such organisations be? Who should they serve? Who should pay? What is the scope of the job? What might these organisations look like? This research aims to provide some insights to help address questions such as these.

---

* For this report, VET is defined as vocationally oriented education in whatever setting it may occur: workplaces, RTOs, TAFEs or schools.

1.2 Research Description

This research aims to locate ARIS in the current 'big picture' of adult literacy and numeracy provision, and to investigate reasons for its formation, its continuing existence and possible scenarios for the future. To fulfil this aim, a range of people who have been closely connected with the ARIS experience have been interviewed, and the information they have provided is presented within the context of the field, as it exists today. The fact that ARIS continues to exist at all in 2002 is remarkable, and suggests an interesting story will unfold.

The scope of this research has of necessity limited the number of interviews, which have been selected to bring differing perspectives to this project. However, the research findings are limited to the data gathered. It has not been possible to seek additional data to fill gaps in information that may be perceived to exist.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Data collection

Data were collected in the following ways:

- Face-to-face interviews with key interviewees
- Telephone and email communication with other contacts
- Reference to a range of government reports
- Scanning of a range of publications, including ARIS publications for relevant data

1.3.2 Interviews

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with seven people. Each interview was about one and a half hours. The interviewees were:

- Jan Hagston and Dave Tout, the two original managers of ARIS, both of whom are still involved in its current operations
- Robyn Hodge, the current Manager of ARIS
- Daryl Evans, a member of the team that recommended the formation of ARIS
- Peter De Natris, the current Victorian Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) manager with funding responsibilities for ARIS
- Rosa McKenna, a previous manager of the Victorian office of Language Australia
- Louise Wignall, a previous education officer at ARIS
- Robin Kenrick, Co-President of Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC), representing users of ARIS services.

Biographical information about the interviewees is attached in Appendix 2. Interview questions (Appendix 3) were circulated to all interviewees prior to interview, and the responses were all taped and transcribed.

Additional information was sought from people working in the field who have not played a central role in the ARIS story, but whose perceptions of ARIS and its operations were necessary to provide a broader picture within the Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE)* field. They include users of ARIS from other organisations such as workplaces or TAFE, or from interstate. Included in this group was a member of the VALBEC executive, a

* ALBE is the acronym commonly used by the adult literacy and numeracy field in Victoria.

representative from an Industry Training and Advisory Board (ITAB), a Certificates in General Education (CGEA) co-ordinator from Western Australia and a literacy teacher from TAFE, Victoria.

1.3.3 Analysing the data

First the data for each interview were categorised according to themes related to the research. Themes were given codes, for example 'ARIS role' (AR), 'Background of Interviewee' (BI) or 'Core Business' (CB). Then, using these categories, data were organised into 'macro' sections, such as the history of ARIS, its current operations, relationships with other organisations and ARIS future. As drafts of the report were developed, the data were reshaped, and corrected in order to reflect what ARIS, as part of a social movement was trying to achieve, and how it was shaped by constraints of the state. Three 'critical friends' provided review and feedback throughout in the process.

1.3.4 Use of reports and publications

The reports and publications were used for three main purposes. Firstly, to provide an historical context for the research, secondly, to ground ARIS development in both Federal and Victorian policy and thirdly, to provide through ARIS own publications explanations of developments and activities that occurred in the organisation.

Section 2: Contexts: Historical, political and philosophical

2.1 Historical factors leading to the formation of ARIS

Adult literacy, as a discrete field of education in Australia, had its beginnings in the 1970s, borrowing practices and policies from overseas, for example the 'Right-to-Read' campaign in the United Kingdom. From this time, organisations of support for the field, including information services, developed. In most states and territories these services flourished in the late 1980s and the 1990s, and yet by 2000, ARIS was the only service surviving in Australia. A brief historic overview will provide a picture of the circumstances that led to the formation of such services, and ARIS in particular, and to some of the factors that have influenced ARIS and the way it has operated.

The 1970s saw the first wave of the widespread development of adult literacy policy and provision in Australia, with involvement of the TAFE sector and the emergence of advocacy bodies. In 1973 the national Whitlam Labor Government started to place emphasis on equity issues and rectifying disadvantage. A visit to Melbourne in 1972 by Paulo Freire helped establish notions of empowerment as a key underpinning philosophy for the field in Australia, and particularly in Victoria. According to Wickert and Zimmerman:

> His visit...is partly responsible for the commitment of Victorian literacy workers to adult education as an agent of social change through community based programs (Wickert and Zimmerman, 1991:181).

This social action perspective set the flavour of the early years of the adult literacy field, and matched the philosophy of many of those involved in the shaping of ARIS.

Adult literacy issues moved very slowly on the Federal political agenda, till various federal government reports helped bring it to the closer attention of the Federal government and the TAFE sector. The Kangan Report (Kangan, 1974), which placed emphasis on the development of individual learners, led to a major restructure of TAFE around Australia. This report noted a lack of literacy as an access problem to further education in TAFE. The following year, the Richardson Report (Richardson, 1975) suggested adult literacy should be a major challenge for TAFE, and a priority for the use of TAFE federal literacy funding. The report introduced the notion that adult education should become a significant responsibility for the states. The next report was the Cadman report (Cadman, 1976). This report also recommended that TAFE authorities should take a lead (Wickert and Zimmerman, 1991:183).

Meanwhile, in Victoria, the Council for Adult Education (now the Centre for Adult Education, or CAE) was a major adult education advocate and provider. In 1973 it conducted a survey of the educational needs of disadvantaged people, which documented the extent of adult illiteracy. The CAE began provision of adult literacy tuition. At the same time, in NSW, literacy programs were being established, and in other states other programs soon followed. By 1976 in Victoria, a fulltime adult basic education course began at Footscray College of TAFE. In NSW, one outcome of the increasing awareness of adult literacy needs was the appointment of Kath White to the newly created TAFE position of Adult Literacy Officer, leading to the establishment in 1979 of the Adult Literacy Information Office (ALIO) in TAFE. This was the first information service for the adult literacy field in Australia.

1977 was an important year for adult literacy. Up to this time adult literacy had been subsumed under the broader adult education banner. In 1977 an adult literacy special interest group, led by the Victorian practitioner, Helen Gribble, broke away from the then Australian Association of Education (AAAE) to form the Australian Council of Adult Literacy (ACAL). It took on the functions of:

> Publication of a newsletter, organisation of conferences, information gathering and exchange, coordination and development of materials and resources, liaison with other educational organisations, and inviting community attention to adult literacy problems. (ACAL 1977:123).

At the same time provision expanded in Victoria. By 1977 it was estimated that over 1000 students were receiving assistance (CAE 1977), and by the late 1970s, adult literacy advocacy bodies at state levels had emerged. 1978 saw the formation of the Victorian Adult Literacy Council (VALC), which in 1986 changed its name to Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC).

By 1980 there was significant TAFE or equivalent adult literacy provision in every state, and territory. Dymock's (1982) national survey of provision showed that adult literacy schemes had mushroomed from two to 180 within a decade. Almost half were in TAFE, and one third were community based, with the overwhelming number of teachers being volunteers, and much of the paid work being sessional. Wickert and Zimmerman (1991:178-180) describe the different paths each state has pursued, resulting in the great complexity of literacy provision that developed in Australia. The development of the Access Resource Centre at the CAE in Victoria was an early attempt to provide support for teachers and tutors, though it did not confine its services to adult literacy and numeracy (Dymock, 1993). Meanwhile, the number of full-time professional ALBE staff was increasing rapidly.

The 1980s saw more reports advocating the provision of government funding. The Labor education policy for 1983 stated that a Labor government would establish a nationwide campaign to combat adult illiteracy (Wickert and Zimmerman, 1991:183). But it was not until 1987 that the Federal Government announced a firm policy on adult literacy by endorsing the National Policy on Languages (NPL) (Lo Bianco, 1987). This was funded with around $4 million over two years for what became the Adult Literacy Action Campaign (ALAC), which was a component of the NPL (Lo Bianco, 1990:18). This was the first significant federal support for adult literacy. The most notable ALAC research project was a survey of Australian adult literacy, *No Single Measure*, (Wickert, 1989). This report not only provided reliable statistics, but also drew media attention to adult literacy and numeracy, helping make it a more public issue (Dymock, 1993). In Victoria, 1987 also saw the release of the discussion paper *Opportunity to do Brilliantly* (Grant, 1987), which presented to the Victorian government the case for commitment to adult literacy.

Reforms proposed by Dawkins, Minister for the Department of Employment, Education and Training (Dawkins, 1997) and the imminent International Literacy Year (ILY), 1990, provided an opportunity for policy development, with the commitment of significant funding for adult literacy by the federal government. ILY raised public awareness of the incidence of literacy and numeracy inadequacy in the community, and led to an increase in research and professional development opportunities.

At this crucial point in time, a decision had to be made by the professional associations. They knew that Dawkins was going to push training reform, and also that 1990 was ILY, so they had a watershed opportunity to raise awareness and demand funding. Professional associations needed to decide what approach they would take. The choices were:

> to remain close to the community and follow a social justice, equity line
>
> or
>
> to target government moves for industry and training reform and propose literacy as being the cornerstone of economic development and training.

In the interim, ACAL received funding from the NPL for the Adult literacy Action Campaign. Leading up to 1990, and as part of it, they conducted an industry symposium, the outcome of which was to take the second option and move with the training agenda. (International Literacy Year Secretariat, 1990). The momentum of evidence gathered from research from ALAC projects, including ACAL activities, with expanded provision into VET, workplaces and labour market contexts led to this position.

Increasingly, adult literacy started to move into the mainstream as links were made with schools and workplaces. In 1991, John Dawkins, Minister for Employment, Education and Training, released a policy paper, *Australia's Language and Literacy Policy* (ALLP) (DEET, 1991), showing that adult literacy had become an issue of sufficient concern to merit a major commitment of funding for TAFE and community education sectors. It was the first detailed attempt by the federal government to define literacy and the role of literacy (and language) in Australian society. It was based on notions of 'human capital' – that literacy education has an economic benefit at all levels: individuals, enterprises and the nation. This move to the mainstream meant pressure for professional development and the increasing accreditation of teachers and tutors, for core curriculum; and for comparable assessment programs across states. The ALLP brought with it major funding for all of these aspects.

2.2 Philosophies underpinning the field

ARIS has always demonstrated a set of values to which the ALBE field has been, and for the most part still remains, committed. An interesting background to these values is provided in a discussion paper by Kath White (1985), in which she traces a set of educational values that shaped adult literacy practice. She identifies the following principles: the centrality of the learner, the importance of teaching with materials relevant to the learner, the recognition of the importance of individuals and their life experiences, and social justice issues. She links these values to factors such as the 1970s focus on the centrality of the individual; the shift to psycholinguistics expounded by Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman and Yetta Goodman, where the primacy of meaning was paramount; Freire's 1972 visit to Melbourne; and the role of adult education in social change. White points out that ACAL adopted Freire's philosophy, with ACAL providing an important role in the national exchange of ideas. She also notes Grant's report *Opportunity to do Brilliantly* (1987) as having a significant impact on the philosophy underpinning the field, especially in Victoria. Developments in the 1980s, such as Halliday's theory of systemic functional grammar, and notions of critical literacy and multiliteracies have also been important influences on the ALBE field. Players in the ARIS story shared these philosophies.

2.3 A mechanism for support in Victoria

The politics and philosophy that have been described provide a background understanding for what happened next in Victoria, and set directions that ARIS would take.

2.3.1 Victorian developments

In Victoria in 1987, VALBEC held their first state conference. Victoria now had reasonable recurrent funding for adult literacy provision, and the ALBE unit of the TAFE Board was established with two staff members. The state government had funding for distribution to organisations delivering adult literacy, and for an establishment phase. VALBEC was consulted about the distribution of funds. Then in 1988, the infrastructure for adult education became bureaucratised within the responsibilities of the Department of Further Education (DFE). This provided an administration centre within government to provide policy advice

and infrastructure support for what was identified as adult education for community based providers.

In 1988-89, the Victorian Labor Government under John Cain launched a major adult literacy and basic education initiative with funding of $2.5 million in 1988-89 and $3.4 million in 1989-90. The DFE commissioned Vin d'Cruz to consult widely and prepare a report on approaches and options. The D'Cruz report (1989), recommended the establishment of a small group to research and write a policy and develop recommendations for future ALBE provision in Victoria. This team also oversaw the allocation of the DFE's research and development budget. Their resulting report, Adult Literacy and Basic Education into the 1990s (Bradshaw et al, 1989), set the directions for literacy provision for the state throughout the 1990s, and recommended the establishment of ARIS.

2.3.2 Establishment of ARIS

By now many of the necessary pieces were in place for ARIS to emerge.

As Evans explains:

> Victoria had a Labor government with a commitment to adult education, substantial funding, fifteen years of lobbying, a significant report and a notion that adult literacy was really important. The time was right.

Evans describes 1989 as the year of consultancy, and it led to the employment of the above ALBE team by the DFE in 1989, with the task of making recommendations regarding the future of ALBE provision and support in the Adult and Community Education (ACE)* sector. The major outcome was the three volume report, *ALBE into the 1990s* (1989). Volume 2 included a list of recommendations, including the proposal to establish the Adult Basic Education Resource and Information Service (ARIS). It is significant to note that the report gave prominence in its recommendations not just to literacy, but to basic education including numeracy and science.

A point relevant to the conception of ARIS, made in the report, was the fact that the people who planned it were emerging from the 70s and 80s, where the ethos was cooperative rather than competitive, and underpinned by the philosophies described by White. It was unlike the competitive climate that followed in the 90s, where these values came under challenge. The intention was to provide resourcing that could make the assumption that people would share ideas and have time to talk to each other.

Evans described the vision that underpinned the recommendation to create ARIS:

> I had a personal history in community education. I'd been part of the group setting up the Learning Exchange. So I had a personal commitment and experience of the role of local community development and that was relevant to the idea behind ARIS... It was also intended that that we provide positive and constructive assistance to the field and that useful things be produced to support quality of learning. These things were curriculum development, professional development and material resources, which would be suitable for delivery at different economies of scale and location.

Evans said it was important that the report was seen to be in touch with the day-to-day realities of community education. The authors of the report were trying to develop services that they themselves, as practitioners, would be confident to use on their return to the field.

Dave Tout was a member of this project team. He said: 'It always felt at that period that Victoria needed something like an ALIO.'

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* The terms 'Adult Community Education' and 'Further Education' are both used in Victoria to describe adult education.

In many ways ARIS was the brainchild of Daryl Evans. Tout says:

> It was Daryl who had the strong ideas, his baby in some ways. The idea was to have regional centres, but a lot of the ideas came from our knowledge of ALIO and the good work it did.

Evan's idea was that ARIS would operate like the central office of a library, sending out 'suitcases' of boxes to the regions, offering the opportunity to evaluate and trial resources before purchasing. However, as ARIS involved only one full-time position, without much budget, Tout recalls:

> It became obvious that it was going to be easier to control something where we had the books and somewhere people could go, could ring up and ask for support.

So ARIS instead was centralised, located within the office of the Division of Further Education: it became a hub of support.

2.3.3 ACFE Act, 1991

Also in 1991, in Victoria, the Adult Community and Further Education Act came into operation (Act 92/1991). ARIS came under the provisions of this Act, which supported the philosophies that underpin ARIS. This Act is still in place.

The Act set out goals for provision in the ACE area, and supported the ACFE regional council system. The Act included in its jurisdiction further education; secondary education for adults; and vocational education and training when provided by an adult education provider established under the Act, or when provided by a community based organisation 'which is not a TAFE college, commercial provider or industry provider' (p2, Act No 91/1991), thus excluding these sectors from its jurisdiction. The Act does include AMES and the Centre for Adult Education within its brief (p1). This has meant that as long as ARIS remained ACFE funded, it would always be linked closely with the community sector, not the VET sector.

Not only does the Act specify areas of responsibility, it also underpins them philosophically, with statements such as 'promote learning…for adults in a manner appropriate for their needs' and 'to meet diverse individual and community needs' (p 5). It specifically includes adult literacy and basic education and access to educational programs, in Section 4 *Objects* (p 5):

> The adult, community and further education objects are:
>
> to meet diverse individual and community needs by providing for and promoting, amongst other things (Section d.)
>
> …a range of flexible quality programs which are responsive to individual and community needs including adult literacy and basic education, adult participation in the final years of secondary education, English as a second language for adults… (Part ii.)

Also addressed is the requirement for additional opportunities for adults to complete a secondary education; equitable access to education; a variety of methods by which programs are implemented; cross-crediting and linking of community and further education with other sectors; and recognition of prior learning (p 6). The Act also provides structures for Regional Councils and their relationships with ACE provision. This is all relevant to the operation of ARIS, because this Act remains the document under which ACFE funds ARIS. De Natris, a current ACFE manager, argues that the Act is well framed, and that it has ensured the survival of the policies of Labor's Cain and Kirner Governments of the late 1980s.

It can be seen from these developments, that the philosophies of adult learning, such as providing access for adults to a general education and meeting individual needs based

learning, were enshrined in the Adult Community and Further Education sector in Victoria. This was different to national policy and was the climate that nurtured the conception of ARIS.

2.4 Political factors influencing ARIS since 1990

Since the late 1980s, fundamental shifts have occurred nationally in the Australian post-compulsory education sector, opening many new sites and modes of delivery of ALBE provision. National developments did not always match the Victorian policy developments that have been described. The story here is of a national training reform agenda, with literacy and numeracy becoming responsive to industry needs, and delivery becoming increasingly located in VET.

2.4.1 National developments

Black (1995) describes the shift in literacy provision to the current corporate federalist position, in which literacy provision is seen by governments, industry and union leaders to have a centre stage role in meeting the needs of the national economy. While the primacy of the individual principle (White, 1983) still applies from the point of view of many teachers, much funding for ALBE is now targeted to meet the economic needs of the nation. Lee and Wickert (1995:141) describe how:

> Adult basic education teachers are no longer construed as marginal to the main business of education. They are also no longer seen as being largely involved in the welfare and social justice issues. They are now seen to be central to the human-capital thesis underpinning the training reform agendas sponsored by the 'competitive state'.

The ALBE field has undergone major changes, with growth in the regulation of its work and participation in competency-based training: outcomes of its response to national training agendas. Lee and Wickert describe the consequences (Lee and Wickert:142):

> For many ABE workers, one of the consequences of this shift in the positioning of their work is a sense of being coopted or colonised by these changes and of having to serve the requirements of funding bodies, often in apparent contradiction to the needs of students.

This has posed dilemmas for ARIS, as the changes have rapidly opened up new sites of literacy and numeracy provision that are not part of the further education sector that comes under the jurisdiction of ACFE.

The ALBE sector responded to these shifts firstly with the National Framework of Adult English Language, Literacy and Numeracy Competency (ACTRAC, 1993), and later with the National Reporting System (NRS, 1994). These documents were attempts by the ALBE field to develop a national framework and reporting system that would allow the complexity of adult language, literacy and numeracy to be reflected while meeting the federal government's requirements for assessment and evaluation tools.

Under Federal Labor's Keating government, and further developed under the Liberal Howard government, industry has become the driving force for vocational education and training. Early initiatives in the VET area were the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program and the Special Intervention Program (SIP), started under the ALLP. WELL programs still continue. SIP evolved into Literacy and Numeracy Teaching (LANT), now expanded to include English language and renamed the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP). More recently, industry-developed Training Packages have replaced curriculum as the vehicle for training. Industry Training and Advisory Boards (ITABs) have been given the role of developing and monitoring training in the VET sector. As there is no

ITAB for general education, a challenge has emerged for the ALBE sector to work effectively in this area; and this continues to be the case.

Changes to systems of distribution of social security have also meant changes to the ALBE area, as under the Howard Government's 'Mutual Obligation' system, welfare recipients are obliged to demonstrate ways in which they have sought to either gain employment or ready themselves for employment in order to receive benefits. This has meant the development of the Literacy and Numeracy Training (LANT) scheme, resulting in many young unemployed people being forced to attend training programs, with progress monitored against the NRS. The dichotomy evident between the federal and Victorian further education sector agendas is clearly drawn, and may have had implications for ARIS, sitting between these two opposing strands.

2.4.2 Victorian developments

In Victoria some key documents have been released which have impacted on the further education area, and which have served to further enshrine the adult learning philosophy already evident.

In 1997, ACFE published *Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities: A Conceptual Framework for Further Education* (Bradshaw, 1997). It outlined a design for the future of further education curriculum in the ACFE funded area and states its philosophical position as:

> A conceptual framework, which concentrates on concepts and ideas and on naming what goals, principles and design aspects matter most in further education curriculum (Bradshaw, 1997:Abstract).

ARIS has supported this document with resources and professional development. However, as a document it has not been adopted outside the Further Education sector in Victoria.

In 2000 the Kirby Report, Conners Report and Schofield Report were published, which together provided the government with advice on key priorities in education and training. The Premier, Steve Bracks, then released a discussion paper, *Knowledge, Innovation, Skills and Creativity* (Department of Education, Employment and Training, 2001), which outlined five goals for the education system, including an increase in the number of adults taking up education and training, and aiming for near-universal participation in post-school education and training (p.4). De Natris looks to the discussion paper to underpin the future work of ARIS.

Section 3: ARIS and its operations

In order to understand the strengths and weaknesses of ARIS as an organisation of support for the adult literacy and numeracy field, it is important to examine in detail a range of factors related to its development and operations. This section of the research report firstly examines the planning and early operations of ARIS. It further explores ARIS range of activities, the people who use (and those who do not use) the ARIS service and the core values that underpin ARIS operations. ARIS relationships with other organisations are investigated, and finally ARIS performance is evaluated. The findings of the research are explored through interview data.

3.1 ARIS role develops

The DFE's initial plan for ARIS provided a blueprint for its establishment. However, it was not long till other factors influenced the direction ARIS would take.

3.1.1 The DFE plan for ARIS

ARIS was designed to be a Victorian institution, located in the adult community and further education sector. It was to be funded by the Director of Further Education in the Ministry of Education. This sector of education was enshrined in legislation in the ACFE Act (1991). ACFE remains a division of the Victorian Government Department's Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) and is advised by a Board appointed by the Minister.

ARIS was initially staffed by an equivalent full-time officer appointed for two years. It was intended that ARIS would support adult literacy and basic education: specifically in the areas of literacy, numeracy and science. A range of functions were outlined for the proposed ARIS officer, in *ALBE into the 1990s: Vol 2*(Bradshaw et al, 1989:107):

> 1 review of literature on curriculum, materials and practice
>
> 2 the state-wide dissemination of written information and publications on curriculum materials and resources
>
> 3 support for regionally based staff and training in curriculum
>
> 4 liaison with the state library system on the dissemination of appropriate materials.

In addition:

> ARIS will also promote the development of a research capacity in curriculum development and methodology in ALBE

And:

> One of the most important issues to be addressed by the Adult Basic Education Resource and Information Service will be cost-effectiveness of resources.

It was also given the task of identifying appropriate and effective materials:

> The ARIS officer would have a clear responsibility to provide to the field quality information about materials, literature, services and tutor education courses (p.129).

An in-house publication was also proposed:

> An in-house publication, such as a newsletter or broadsheet, is proposed as part of ARIS (p.129).

3.1.2 ARIS operations commence

ARIS formally began in 1990 as a service and a project of ACFE, with one full-time position, shared by Jan Hagston (then Kindler) and Dave Tout. It was housed within the office of ACFE. In the first edition of the ARIS Bulletin (1990, Vol 1 No1), Hagston and Tout outlined how the newly opened ARIS would fulfil its brief. It would:

> Promote the development and dissemination of curriculum and research information, issues and methodology in ALBE across Victoria (ARIS Bulletin No 1:1).

ARIS was to work though DFE Regional Offices and in consultation with them. They would produce quarterly journals, occasional papers, annotated bibliographies and use DFE networks, professional development workshops and a database of ALBE curriculum and research resources and expertise. It was also envisaged that:

> Another major role of the ARIS service will be to promote the development of a research capacity in the area of curriculum development and methodology in adult basic education. (ARIS Bulletin No 1:2)

ARIS maintains most of these activities today.

3.1.3 ARIS relationship with NLIA

Within two years, some fundamental changes to ARIS took place. Most important was its relocation from the DFE bureaucracy in Rialto Towers, to be located with the National Languages Institute of Australia (NLIA) in premises in East Melbourne. This was the start of ARIS second key relationship.

Tout and Hagston describe the history of Language Australia:

> Language Australia was initially the National Language Institute of Australia (NLIA) and derived from the 1987 National Policy on Languages, and was formally launched in November 1990 as a multi-location Key Centre of Teaching and Research, comprising five university research centres. In 1992 the Australian Language and Literacy Policy succeeded the National Policy on Languages and the Institute added the words 'and literacy' to its title, to create the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA). In addition to its previous role in respect of languages, the Institute was provided with funding to increase its work in English education, adult literacy, child English as a second language, child literacy, plain English and style.
>
> The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia developed a network of over 30 research, teaching and professional development centres distributed in universities across Australia. This included the Adult Literacy Research Network (ALRN) of adult literacy research centres. The Institute received core funding from the Commonwealth government to coordinate and run the research centres. The Institute was governed by a representative Board of Directors, whose members were nominated by education ministers from the Federal and State Governments; the Federal minister for immigration and Multicultural Affairs; as well as the non-government schools sector; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission; and business and industry representatives. In 1997 the Federal Government funding for the NLLIA ceased, and it took on the more corporate name of Language Australia, and is a non-for-profit educational company. Many of its research centres and nodes still exist.

McKenna adds:

> NLIA was established to implement key areas of the NPL (1987) and its brief, funding and relationship with the Commonwealth Government expanded under the ALLP. ARIS did not have any legal status and needed an organisation which could employ staff and operate in an environment that was conducive to supporting education functions. NLLIA was not a provider of adult education but was already engaged in support services for

> ESL, LOTEs (Languages other than English) and testing. It had a role in research, research dissemination and professional development.

She explains the new relationship:

> ARIS was located at NLIA as a project and NLIA was responsible for the service as for any other project. It was seen as being mutually beneficial for ARIS and ALRN [Adult Literacy Research Network, of which NLIA was part] because of some of the synergies between national and state functions.

Tout and Hagston describe these changes in ARIS Bulletin Vol 3 No 1, 1992:

> As demands on ARIS grew, the location within the Rialto building became more inappropriate, so in June this year [1992] ARIS relocated. This enabled ARIS to be more accessible and available to users, and to have more space for its resource collection and operations. The NLLIA…agreed to house and support ARIS through a grant paid to the NLLIA by the Adult, Community and Further Education board (p1).

With ARIS initial location within the office of the then DFE, Tout and Hagston operated as bureaucrats. They were not employed as public servants. They soon found themselves unable to operate in a non-teacher friendly environment, in an office without space for a resource collection. Tout says:

> A move became imperative. At the time, Rosa McKenna, who had been a policy officer for ALBE within the DFE, was seconded as a coordinator for the ALRN at Language Australia.

It was in the interests of both Language Australia and ARIS to relocate, and so they moved together. Tout says:

> The attraction of going to Language Australia was that it was seen to be an independent organisation, with no particular interest in just one sector of adult education.

ARIS did not want to be seen as political.

Language Australia agreed to house and support ARIS. ACFE funded Language Australia on an annual grant basis to provide the ARIS service. This financial arrangement is still in place. ARIS continued to offer the same range of services and activities but the move to Language Australia provided an opportunity to develop networks that went beyond Victoria and even beyond Australia, as well as providing ARIS with access to some new educational databases (ARIS, Vol 3 No 1, 1990:1-2).

The move to Language Australia added a new aspect to ARIS. Where ACFE is a part of the Victorian Government, Language Australia is a national body, and one with both a language and literacy focus. So from the time of the move, ARIS was both a project of ACFE, and a project of Language Australia. This relationship is further examined later in this section.

Hagston and Tout describe another change to ARIS role that occurred at that time. The intention to support regional resource centres had not proved achievable with the funding available, and a more substantial central collection of resources was seen to be necessary. The change of accommodation enabled ARIS to provide a centrally located service, able to operate as a hub for people involved in the adult literacy and numeracy field. McKenna adds:

> This partnership also enabled ARIS do develop as a publisher. Language Australia always had a publishing function and as resources tightened, ARIS undertook much of this role, becoming involved in publishing a range of publications as well as research reports.

3.1.4 A new focus on adult education

A further shift in ARIS role is evident in a name change that occurred in 1998. ARIS dropped 'basic' from its name, changing from the *Adult Basic Education Resource and Information Service* to *Adult Education Resource and Information Service*. This change came about as a result of a shift in the ACFE funding ratio, which led to a greater emphasis for ARIS on community education. McKenna and Wignall note that, as a result, much of the work being done currently by ARIS is related to the implementation of state government policies about adult education, and is not limited to adult literacy and numeracy, though ARIS clearly maintains a special interest in the adult literacy and numeracy area.

De Natris confirms ARIS current role as:

> Providing leadership in adult learning; informing and shaping policy through the leadership role that it plays in further education.

He envisages an even wider role for the future, suggesting that it will not be limited to the further education sector. He says:

> ARIS has a wider role to play to the whole of the post-compulsory and adult eduction area... I see it being very much focused in the literacy and numeracy area, but [there are] TAFE institutes and higher levels of secondary school and a number of other providers of public education in Victoria [who] need more exposure to its services.

ARIS today reflects these changes, as well as maintaining its original focus in its current operations. Its current role is described on the website, www.aris.com.au:

> ARIS, the Adult Education Resource and Information Service, offers services to practitioners, researchers and others interested in adult education, especially adult English language, literacy and numeracy.

The services it offers include the resource collection, information on research and curriculum development materials, p ofessional development, support for CGEA providers, newsletters and information sheets, publication of adult education resources, and provision of information in other areas of the ALBE field. In addition, ARIS now manages the ACFE clearinghouse with a formalised arrangement for publication of ACFE materials. It can be seen that ARIS has retained much of its original focus over the ten years of its operation.

3.2 Implementing the plan

ARIS quickly became a hub of support for the literacy and numeracy field. It was a place of resources and ideas, offering support for new teachers and access to a literacy and numeracy network.

3.2.1 ARIS initial impact

De Natris, in his current role in ACFE, describes ARIS as a well-timed response to a need that emerged through the changing post-compulsory environment through the 80s and 90s.

As soon as ARIS appeared, it had an impact on practitioners in the ALBE area. Kenrick, currently co-president of VALBEC, used ARIS straight away. For her, they suddenly appeared on the scene.

> I remember being absolutely thrilled with the material they [ARIS] were sending out... When you're hungry for ideas and knowledge, it was just fantastic to get a publication that listed activities that were happening and particularly their annotated bibliographies and reviews of materials.

But the impact was not just in the areas of resources and practitioner support. For Robyn Hodge, now Manager of ARIS, it provided an ALBE network. Hodge entered the field in 1992 as an ALBE coordinator in a community centre in Melbourne West. She says:

> We were subscribers to ARIS and I realised ARIS was the network. ... It was my first inroad into networking and finding out what was going on in the field. It was the biggest boon to developing my field of knowledge about what was going on in adult literacy.

Another aspect of the initial impact that ARIS had on practitioners was to support teachers new in the field. For de Natris, ARIS became a very important part of his support structure in his formative years as a teacher. He relates that:

> ARIS were an invaluable resource for me as a teacher, and gave me instant responses to my needs in literacy and numeracy [teaching]... I may have required new methodology in thinking, in how I approached the learners, materials, resources and it also gave me a place to...put forward theories and ideas.

3.2.2 ARIS operations

The various roles ARIS performs make up the day to day operations of ARIS staff. These roles are further explored in the following areas: the resource collection; professionalisation of the field; information services; ARIS role in curriculum; ARIS advisory role and project work. Hagston sums up the ARIS role as 'our role is to provide advice and support'.

Hagston, Tout and Hodge describe the current role as related directly to the funding they receive from ACFE to run the ARIS service for the ACFE sector in Victoria. However, ARIS also conducts a range of other activities related to its relationship with Language Australia and for the literacy and numeracy field in general. An important change to ARIS operations occurred when the funding mechanism changed in 1997. The funding cuts that resulted impacted heavily on ARIS.

By this time, ARIS had introduced charges for some of its services. McKenna explains:

> Charges were introduced even before funding cuts were made to Language Australia, and resulted from the lack in change in the funding allocation from ACFE, but [ACFE had] increased the performance standards required in their contracts.

The cuts to Language Australia's own budget exacerbated this situation. ARIS also needed to increase its involvement in project work to gain additional income.

Hagston and Tout do not see that they have a role to be publicly political in their operations. One of the ways they have achieved this is by keeping ARIS activities separate from VALBEC, which has a lobbying role in Victoria.

3.2.2.1 Role in collecting and maintaining the resource collection

ARIS is the repository for what has now become a unique collection of published materials related to the adult literacy and numeracy field. This is particularly important since the closure of ALIO, and the removal of the Multicultural Access Library, which houses the ALIO resource collection, to a location that is not readily accessible to its user group. The ARIS resource collection draws many researchers and tertiary students to ARIS. It houses relevant journals, research reports, policy documents, and teaching resources. ARIS now charges an annual subscription to borrowers from the collection.

ARIS acts as the ACFE clearinghouse as part of its contract with ACFE, and holds all ACFE publications and makes them available for borrowing or purchase. It was also funded by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, DETYA, (now the Department of Education, Science and Training, DEST) to establish a clearinghouse of all WELL and ANTA National Adult Literacy Innovative project projects and reports. However, as Tout says:

> It now holds over 300 such resources, but it needs to promote and advertise this collection more and make it more accessible to bodies such as ITABs and industry.

He comments in relation to this aspect of the collection that 'it is something we don't do very well'.

McKenna says that although ARIS is a clearinghouse for WELL products, it does not have contact with ITABs, and so is not tapping into the huge number of resources being developed in industry around adult literacy. It no longer receives financial support to house the WELL and ANTA materials.

In addition to the physical resource collection, ARIS has an online database of its entire resource collection, including journal articles.

3.2.2.2 Role in offering information services

ARIS offers an information service that is available to anyone who chooses to use it. It is in no way restricted to the ACFE sector. Information is offered through the various publication channels already described. It is also provided free by telephone and email. Since the demise of ALIO, ARIS is the only centralised adult literacy and numeracy information service in Australia, based as it is in Melbourne, but offering a resource to the rest of Australia. Its workload has increased, particularly at the national level. As Hodge points out, 'We are the only ones doing the central job'. She observes that in addition, national policy changes have created more work for ARIS. This is a very time consuming activity and one for which ARIS makes no charge, and which does not form any part of the ACFE brief. Hodge expressed concerns about this growing aspect of ARIS work:

> We spend a lot of time actually serving communities other than Victoria, for which we are not paid... For example, when DETYA puts out the LANT tenders and an RTO in Western Australia wants to find out how to apply, they ring here...I wasn't aware of it before ALIO's demise, but I would say it's probably increased [since the closure of ALIO]... We can be on the phone for a very long time. It's a very vexatious question of time. When tenders are coming due, the phone starts to ring red hot.

Another growth area is the number of tertiary students from Victorian universities who draw heavily on ARIS information services, and who are regular visitors to the resource collection. Again, this service is free, and time consuming. However, valuable relationships are established in this way.

ARIS is often used as a source of information about the adult literacy and numeracy field. Hodge describes how difficult it is to gain a clear view of 'the big picture', describing the field as a jigsaw, and pointing out that it is often difficult to know who to approach in regard to different issues. However, she believes ARIS has a flair for understanding this, saying:

> We see the trends that emerge and we try to pick up on them...on the connections of what people are doing in different locations and then share them further... I'm amazed at how much of the whole jigsaw that we actually do know, and people ring up and are immensely relieved to find out that someone actually does know how it all works.

This ability is one of ARIS key roles. ARIS is in a position where staff hear what is happening, and can respond. Hagston provides an example:

> People ask how they should be teaching. For instance, when there was a lot of younger people coming into adult literacy programs, we just had streams of people wanting resources to use with youth...so because people contact you for information, or something new comes up in their situation, then obviously you are aware and react pro-actively.

3.2.2.3 Role in promoting professionalism in the field

ARIS carries out a range of activities to assist in promoting professionalism of practitioners. ARIS publications and professional development activities support this role.

ARIS has two key publications, the *ARIS Bulletin* (published quarterly) and the *Monthly Memo* (ten editions per year), which have existed without significant change since ARIS commenced operations. Each edition of *ARIS Bulletin* typically contains a feature article related to an issue or some research in the ALBE field: reviews of resources by practitioners; abstracts of new resources and journal readings; and perhaps some project reports. The *Monthly Memo*'s purpose is to disseminate local information and news; provide an update of ARIS own professional development activities; and advertise events of interest at state, national and international levels. ARIS also produces information sheets to support good practice. Publications are now obtained through payment of an annual subscription fee, though in ARIS early years they were free. ARIS publications enjoy a very high reputation, and have a national and international readership, as well as being widely used in the ACE sector in Victoria. Even so, ARIS personnel express concerns about the difficulty of achieving distribution in some of the areas that would benefit from receiving them, including ACE.

In addition to the paper-based publications, the ARIS website also offers professional development. It provides online resource pages and fact sheets, particularly CGEA curriculum support materials and numeracy teaching resources. ARIS has maintained a strong focus in numeracy professional development provision over the years.

ARIS offers a range of face-to-face professional development activities. These activities often support new curriculum or policy documents that have emerged. Recent examples are the AMES curriculum Certificate in English Language and Literacy (CELL) and ACFE's further education framework, *Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities*, both of which reflect ARIS role beyond ALBE. Much professional development supports the CGEA. Other regular professional development offerings are the more substantial courses, Adult Literacy Teaching and Adult Numeracy Teaching, offering support to teachers who may be new to the field.

An issue that arises in relation to professional development delivery is finding ways to meet the diverse needs of practitioners. Hodge believes that ARIS has moved with the times, offering professional development in new areas. However, the need to offer professional development to people new to the field remains, and ARIS finds it difficult to be all things to all people.

3.2.2.4 Role in curriculum

As ACFE has moved further into accredited curriculum, ARIS has increased its role in the curriculum process. It is closely aligned with the ACFE curricula, particularly the Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA). ARIS personnel have been involved in the development of the CGEA since its accreditation in 1992. Their involvement has taken the form of project work, not just in writing the curricula for reaccreditation in 1996 and 2001, but also in developing support documents, professional development and development of the CGEA website. The implementation of the CGEA is widespread and growing. It is extensively used throughout Australia, while remaining the main ALBE curriculum used in the ACE sector in Victoria. De Natris envisages an increasing role for the CGEA in the secondary schools sector. Tout explains how first attempts are now being made to broaden the CGEA, to:

> Provide stronger pathways to VET and other further education courses through elective modules, chosen from units of competence from training packages or modules from other accredited courses.

This level of involvement has given ARIS a deep understanding of curriculum for the further education area, and ARIS personnel have worked on a range of ACFE curriculum projects. ARIS is perceived by many people as the 'owner' of the CGEA with the enormous involvement it has had over many years.

3.2.2.5 Project role

ARIS has in recent years taken on an increasing number of externally funded projects. ARIS staff see project work as very valuable, as it not only assists ARIS financially but also adds to their pool of expertise. ARIS employs practitioners in the field to either do the work or to backfill ARIS staff and thus keeps in touch with current trends and needs. As Tout argues:

> We've needed project work ...to let ourselves out of some of the ARIS work so that someone who comes directly from a teaching background is around.

The project work has become so important that Hagston now has taken on the management of project work as her key role. Staff hired for project work usually work or backfill ARIS staff on a part-time basis of one or two days per week. The curriculum projects, in particular, including the CGEA have provided many projects for ARIS over the years.

Resource production has also been a significant source of project work, though the nature of this has changed dramatically over recent years. Hodge describes changes in the work. She observes that there are now less paper based and more Internet or CD ROM resources being produced. A recent example of a resource project is Hodge's ANTA funded 'Innovative Grant' project, 'Learning2Learn', a learning Internet site.

Other recent projects Hodge mentions include ARIS part in Verification Australia, which monitored the delivery of DEST's LANT program; and the review and writing of materials for TAFE Frontiers, TAFE Victoria's commercial flexible delivery provider. She notes that ARIS applies for projects competitively with other providers.

3.2.2.6 Advisory role

ARIS has an increasing advisory role. Hodge and Hagston describe how they are often invited to be part of advisory bodies or reference groups, such as those required by ACFE, ANTA projects or curriculum projects. This gives ARIS a role in monitoring the quality of literacy and numeracy provision. Although this is time consuming and unpaid work, it keeps ARIS informed and in touch with developments in the field.

3.2.2.7 Staffing of ARIS

ARIS has operated almost always with part-time staff. From the beginning, Hagston and Tout shared the position of Manager of ARIS, an arrangement which continued until 2000. Hodge now occupies that position as 0.6 of a full-time position, with the support of a 0.4 Professional Officer. Currently, the librarian is .8 of a full-time position, and other part-time staff work one or two days per week, doing project work or supporting ARIS work. Tout notes that this reflects the sessional nature of work in the ACFE funded sector. It helps keep ARIS in touch with the field. However, it also means that apart from Hagston and Tout, over the years there have been few people within the organisation who have been in a position to build a commitment or vision for the future of ARIS.

3.2.3 Core values

ARIS core values underpin the work they do, and have not changed substantially in the years of ARIS operations, although they have been put under pressure by a range of factors.

Principles of meeting learner needs are a characteristic of the Victorian Further Education sector. These principles sit comfortably with the philosophical underpinnings of ARIS personnel. However, characteristics of competency based training that are part of national

policy sit less comfortably. Even so, Tout believes that providers in Australia, including ARIS, have been very creative in meeting the obligations of competency based curriculum and the training reform agenda of the federal government, while still maintaining their beliefs.

ARIS personnel have always adhered to their philosophies and relied on core values that have sustained them throughout ARIS operations. Tout comments: 'Your educational, social and political values underpin the work you do'. Hagston and Tout identify empowerment of people through literacy and numeracy learning as crucial, summed up by Tout as 'social constructivism with a political bent'. Hagston says:

> My personal values are more political. ...It goes back to how you thought of things when you were teaching. To me teaching is about empowering people to do things in their roles...it's about giving students, giving people power to do things in their lives and take control of their lives. Which does include concern for students' needs, but I think it's much more than that. Because if it's just about students' needs, it's not proactive. I think it's the role of a teacher and an organisation like this to actually provide new ideas, models, leaderships, all those sorts of things, whereas if you're just looking at meeting student's needs, you may only be functional, just responding to what [teachers] say they require.

As De Natris and Kenrick have pointed out, ARIS proactive approach has resulted in new ideas, models and leadership, rather than only providing a response to teachers' requirements.

Belief in access to a good general education is another of Tout's core values. Related to this is a belief in the importance of learner pathways. Some ACFE developments that ARIS supports are relevant to this belief. De Natris sees that a good general education can lead to vocational studies. Wignall also sees that student pathways have become more of a focus and that articulation into higher education is evident, for example in ACFE's curriculum, the Diploma of Further Education. This diploma is designed to provide an orientation to study, and assist people, who have been out of study or the workforce for a long time, make good decisions to meet their lifelong learning needs.

Being responsive to new ideas is another important value for ARIS. Tout says that ARIS is willing to incorporate new ideas and promote them through the work it does. Other interviewees agree that ARIS is very good at responding to emerging trends and listening to the views of the field, and takes a leadership position. Hagston says:

> Australia has been unique. There's a coming together of people who have the same kind of vision, which enables us to be creative and take on board what's happening and move along ourselves.

Evans adds that ARIS has always listened to the field, and that it needs the trust of practitioners in their response to the field. He says that ARIS provides a service at a non-trivial level. De Natris agrees that ARIS is very good at responding to the environment it is in, and so remaining relevant.

ARIS values theoretical soundness, and has a high reputation for underpinning the work it does with educationally reliable theory. Tout explains:

> In the early 90s, when we started, we were very active in all that [Halliday] stuff...the same with the critical literacy movement. You can't ignore the fact that there is a really powerful tool out there that teachers can use.

Wignall also sees an ARIS core value as the recognition that literacy and numeracy are not just functional skills, but involve higher order skills such as critical literacy and understanding different text types. She mentions the emergence of the notion of multiliteracies, as well as work-based literacy. She sees ARIS commitment to teaching literacy and numeracy as core

ARIS values. McKenna agrees that ARIS is up-to-date about theoretical constructs of literacy. ARIS has had to keep up with these developments and has used them to resource the field in new areas.

Hodge expresses ARIS commitment to adult learning. Again, interviewees support the view that ARIS does this very well. Wignall observes that ARIS recognises that teaching adults is different to the kinds of teaching delivered to children, and that adult learning requires a specific set of skills. She sees that professional development is needed for teachers to make the transition from school to adult learning successfully. Hodge believes that understanding the distinction between adult and child learning is vital, even though the boundaries between adult provision and youth provision are now blurred with increased delivery of literacy and numeracy to early school leavers. She is concerned that there is a shift in the number of training providers (who may or may not be ARIS users), who do not demonstrate commitment to adult learning principles, particularly the focus on learners' individual needs. She sees that providers offering competency-based training are increasingly looking for off-the-peg solutions to educational issues, and that ARIS has a role in communicating the importance of focusing on learners and their needs in situations of competency based education.

3.2.4 Main users of ARIS

From the beginning, ARIS has supported the ACFE funded sector in particular. However, its brief has never been exclusive to that sector. It is important to look at who the current users are, whether that group has changed over time, and which literacy and numeracy providers are not using ARIS, as well as some of the reasons for this.

3.2.4.1 In Victoria

It is not surprising that the ACFE funded sector is the biggest user group. Hodge says this has changed little over time. Nevertheless, ARIS is concerned about the difficulty of getting information to the community sector. Says Tout:

> When we go out and visit programs, we often find that teachers don't actually get our information because it gets to a coordinator of a program, and the teachers don't have access. It's a perennial problem.

Hodge notes that the tertiary sector is the second biggest user group, as she provides assistance to student groups that come in to visit from universities with their lecturers (23.8% of users in 2001). Tout notes in relation to university lecturers and students:

> Most of them now know that ARIS is their best source of knowledge, books etcetera, and they can be quite demanding because [teachers] want to bring the whole class in…They can take a lot of time.

As ARIS now supports further education more generally, some ARIS users come from outside the adult literacy and numeracy sector. English language practitioners are a growing group of ARIS users as ARIS supports delivery of curriculum such as CELL. These shifts raise concerns. McKenna suggests that ARIS could damage its adult literacy and numeracy base as it may move into areas such as ESL that are already supported by other bodies. Hodge also believes that ARIS should not lose its adult literacy and numeracy focus. She sees that literacy and numeracy provision needs specialist support more than other areas do, such as in English language, where resources are readily available, and learners themselves are often more skilled in finding the support they need.

An additional group of ARIS users are policy makers, though they tend to use ARIS advice and expertise rather than the resources. Researchers, curriculum writers and project workers

are also ARIS users, though these users are often also practitioners and so may already be users of ARIS.

It is also important to look at who is not using ARIS. TAFE in Victoria has fluctuated in its use of ARIS services, with 18.5% of ARIS users coming from TAFE in 2001, compared to 25.7% from the community/ACFE sector.

McKenna explains the TAFE ALBE provision:

> TAFE colleges are not funded by ACFE, so TAFE colleges get their adult literacy money as part of the general education bucket. There'd have to be huge [adult literacy] hours in it, but it's very hard to identify. I'd say the TAFE college adult literacy effort would be much larger than ACFE, but ACFE have carriage of it as a policy, as a program.

The lack of identification of specific adult literacy and numeracy funding means there is no central contact point with literacy and numeracy practitioners in TAFE college in the way that exists with ACFE.

TAFE teachers have always have been represented as users, as Evans explains:

> There were post compulsory [education] staff and professional development staff in TAFE who inherited a concern for adult second chance education, so that the relationship with TAFE was never totally ignored. But the relationship has always been small.

It is relevant to examine TAFE colleges ALBE provision in Victoria to further understand TAFE practitioners' relatively lesser use of ARIS. TAFE colleges offer a range of language, literacy and numeracy provision for both general education and VET related study. A full-time literacy teacher from Victoria's Swinburne University explained that TAFE colleges often operate as part of universities there. She described typical ALBE provision in TAFE colleges as being offered through an Access Department, where language, literacy and numeracy are delivered in four main ways. Language teaching is offered through the Certificate of Spoken and Written English (CSWE) or the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). Literacy and numeracy are offered through the CGEA, often with DEST funded clients in the LLNP program. TAFE college teachers provide VET training through WELL, and also offer on-campus Study Support for students with language, literacy or numeracy learning needs who are enrolled in vocational courses. Even though the CGEA is widely used in TAFE colleges, the teacher from Swinbourne reveals that there are TAFE college literacy and numeracy teachers who are unaware of the existence of ARIS or its connection with the CGEA.

Another group of practitioners in Victoria, who may not be familiar with ARIS services, are new providers to the field. McKenna identified two groups: trainers in workplaces delivering Training Package competencies; and successful tenderers of LLNP programs. Says McKenna:

> I think a lot of newcomers to adult literacy don't know about ARIS. It is a completely foreign concept to industry people. New practitioners who come in are unaware [of ARIS]. So ARIS is a somewhat hidden resource.

Tout and Hagston agree that they do not service industry/training package people well. Nevertheless, LLNP providers around Australia, including some welfare agencies, are in touch with ARIS and draw on a wide range of ARIS services, including for example professional development activities delivered in both NSW and Queensland to Mission Australia.

3.2.4.2 Nationally

ARIS, as the only adult literacy and numeracy information service in Australia, draws users from all over the country. Its links to Language Australia have resulted in a national profile and user group. Hagston says:

> Language Australia means we have a definite national thing. We have to respond to people from other states and look outside Australia too.

Hodge notes that the number of interstate users has increased since other information services have disappeared. This is something for which providers in other states express a need. For example, the CGEA Coordinator from Western Australia said:

> Now there is no centralised resource centre [in WA], so many practitioners take advantage of the ARIS resource database, and ARIS service is seen as an essential support mechanism for WA literacy and numeracy program managers and teachers.

Other interstate users are looking for information as they tender for national funding.

Nationally, a gap in ARIS usage is evident. Cinthia Del Grosso, National Project Manager (WELL) with Transport and Distribution Training Australia Ltd, is familiar with ARIS from her own literacy background. However, she says:

> My concerns are for my colleagues throughout the other national and state ITABs (Industry, Training and Advisory Boards) who are only now coming to grips with the idea of language, literacy and numeracy integrated into the Training Package concept. ...I would predict that perhaps only three or four of the twenty-five national ITABs are aware of ARIS and the service it provides.

Del Grosso also expresses concern for WELL trainers, who often feel isolated when working in industry training. If they do not know about ARIS from their own background, they are unlikely to find out about it. McKenna also expressed concern for literacy and numeracy providers in workplace settings, saying:

> It's hard to find [the literacy] in training packages. ...[In fitting] old curriculum to the new units of competency, [you] might not cover everything that is of merit in the competency. So there's this problem, particularly around literacy, because it's not identified, it's only the underpinning thing. So how do you teach the underpinning, if it's not clearly located? ...I think it's a vehicle. But I don't know that we've grasped that.

She argues that ARIS has a role here:

> The supporting mechanisms are around in terms of ARIS and other groups. [They're] not supporting the field in any way to come to terms with what their role in that might be in ...supporting the implementation of training packages. It's a whole new area of teaching and learning. The literacy is really crucial, but ARIS is silent on this.

She expressed concern that ARIS is not providing this support.

3.2.4.3 Internationally

ARIS has always looked outside Australia for journals from overseas, searching in them for resources. Tout says that being located with Language Australia has broadened ARIS spectrum in having a more international outlook on education. Wignall observes that:

> The fact that [ARIS] holds a lot of the world reports, as well as ANTA reports, on the database, gives ARIS a feeling for what is going on nationally and internationally.

This international interaction is a two-way street. McKenna explains that ARIS enjoys international readership of the ARIS Bulletin and ARIS resources, with Australian resources being highly regarded overseas. International usage has no doubt increased in recent times through the ARIS website.

3.3 ARIS key relationships

ARIS has two key organisational relationships that remain fundamental to its operations, ACFE and Language Australia. As Hodge notes, 'ARIS wouldn't exist without either.' ARIS organisational arrangements with both have already been explained. In this section some of the implications and tensions that arise from these two relationships are explored.

3.3.1 Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE)

ARIS relationship with ACFE is based in its funding arrangement through Language Australia. ACFE is one division of the Victorian Government Department, Office of Training, and Tertiary Education (OTTE); however ARIS agreement is confined to the ACFE division. Apart from demonstrating that it has met its ACFE funding obligations, ARIS is free to carry out its business as it chooses. However, this was not always the case. In the early years a tension existed between ACFE and ARIS related to ARIS independence. Tout says that it took four to five years to sort out ARIS role in relation to ACFE. ACFE wanted control of the ways in which ARIS operated. This issue was resolved when ACFE accepted that they were subcontracting out a service to Language Australia and that provided performance targets were met, Language Australia could manage and operate ARIS independently, and the current arrangement was recognised.

ACFE remains the key source of funding for ARIS, which for 2001 was $98 000 (which, as Hagston points out, is not a great increase on the $80 000 received in the early years). The funding carries with it a range of activities and responsibilities that ARIS conducts on ACFE's behalf. These responsibilities have always been a factor in the special relationship between ARIS and the community sector. Hodge argues:

> Our core business must relate to our funding source, which is to serve the adult community and further education sector in Victoria.

Yet Tout, Hagston and Hodge all see ACFE funding as both a strength and a constraint, as it directly impacts on the work they do, bringing with it both responsibilities and freedoms.

Peter De Natris elaborates on ARIS obligations under its ACFE contract. Language Australia is contracted to deliver the ARIS service to maintain the library resource, undertake projects of curriculum development and also play an advisory role to the ACFE Board. However, De Natris sees a broader role for ARIS in the future. He suggests that ARIS may take on a wider role in relation to the whole adult education sector, although remaining focused in the adult literacy and numeracy area. He sees possible expansion into TAFE colleges and secondary education sectors, which he feels would benefit from the use of ARIS services. De Natris expresses awareness of the different needs of the literacy, numeracy and language areas, seeing a possible increase in the role ARIS plays in the ESL sector. He maintains that ARIS future role will be determined by ARIS, together with the ACFE Board.

3.3.2 Language Australia

Language Australia has undergone major changes during the time it has managed ARIS. During the early 1990s it benefited from major funding support from (then) DETYA, and had over thirty research centres nationally. However, for the last four years Language Australia has received no core funding from government, and no longer has its research centres. It is now a trimmed down organisation, its core function being consultation, which is mostly conducted overseas. It has a small secretariat in Canberra. Joseph Lo Bianco is the CEO.

Tout is a director of Language Australia, as well as the Melbourne based regional manager. Language Australia holds a contract with ACFE, with ARIS being a contracted service. Hagston and Tout describe ARIS relationship with Language Australia:

> Language Australia is the company that runs ARIS. ...It's the organisation that gets the grant to run ARIS. So ARIS is simply part of one aspect of Language Australia's functions. [The ACFE money] comes to Language Australia, Language Australia then decides how to operate... Language Australia has a number of different units and ARIS is just one of those.

However, the ARIS relationship with Language Australia is so entwined that there is confusion by many people about the lines of separation between them. The boundaries between the two organisations were difficult for most interviewees to pin down. Although the relationship appears unclear, Tout considers ARIS to be an integrated part of Language Australia. Currently the relationship does not present overwhelming dilemmas, as Tout indicates when he observes that:

> Various tensions exist, though not so much now...we sort of ignore them, but there are tensions because of the funding.

He goes on to amplify one tension:

> Basically Language Australia has funded and supported and got ARIS out of trouble for the time that we've been here... ARIS is a demanding part of Language Australia, and up to now it's not a profitable part. Now we really have to operate all our units as profitable bits.

The need for profitability creates a tension for ARIS when survival becomes an issue. To isolate ARIS and treat it as unprofitable is, as Tout says, 'an accountant's view of the world'. As the Victorian manager, this is something he has had to come to terms with.

The ACFE funding paid to Language Australia for ARIS activities represents about ten percent of the Melbourne Office of Language Australia's operating funds. This money covers some ARIS staffing and resource costs. It is at present the only core funding Language Australia receives.

Since federal funding ceased, Language Australia has undertaken tendered projects and continues a range of activities it had developed. One of its fee for service activities is the Occupational English Test for health professionals from overseas who want to practise in Australia, an important and ongoing role for Language Australia. An additional function for Language Australia is the production of publications in the area of language and literacy right across the range of educational sectors, and it is classified as a commercial publisher.

Language Australia supports ARIS in a range of ways, though not through direct financial input. Language Australia covers the cost of premises, and ARIS is able to tap into Language Australia's infrastructure. One example is that Language Australia staff carries out the administrative aspects of ARIS professional development delivery. Language Australia also publishes ARIS materials, and ARIS is able to feed a lot of work into the Language Australia publishing house.

Projects ARIS undertakes are closely linked with the Language Australia relationship. Tout explains that:

> Our arrangement with Language Australia has been that ARIS may not be profitable as an institution, given its core funding, but it actually brings in all these projects because of the expertise that's based around the core of ARIS.

These projects remain crucial to Language Australia, and therefore to ARIS. Hagston adds:

> We've tended to use the ARIS name to get projects, which have then been seen to be part of ARIS. Now, I think it's really unclear where they fit in. You could call it ARIS Language Australia, but you've still got that ARIS bit. So [there are] all those projects that we do, but which are not officially part of the ARIS business.

3.3.3 Strengths and weaknesses in the key relationships

ARIS could not exist in its present form without both of its key relationships. ACFE is the source of core funding for ARIS, but Language Australia is the holder of the ACFE contract, and continues to provide vital support for ARIS.

The relationship with Language Australia has strengthened ARIS. Hagston and Tout see that their relationship has provided ARIS with a more national and international outlook on education. However, the relationship has also always presented ARIS with a dilemma, as both organisations have a different focus, leaving ARIS role in relation to both somewhat unclear. It is a challenge for ARIS to achieve a national focus while meeting ACFE needs. It is also a tension that has never been resolved, although Tout says 'currently we've stopped worrying about it'.

At times in the history of ARIS, this tension has played a fundamental role in the directions ARIS has pursued. McKenna, who became manager of the Melbourne office of Language Australia in the mid 1990s, thereby became the manager of ARIS. She describes the focus of the Language Australia: 'My brief was broader than literacy. It was language and literacy. It was national'. She relates this focus to a DETYA funded project in 1997, which aimed to develop a national clearinghouse, drawing on the strengths of ARIS. McKenna saw strength in the notion of a centrally located national clearinghouse that held a set of databases broadly based across the field of literacy and language, including both child and adult materials. At that time, important, but separate, resource collections were held in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. The research network was operating very strongly within Language Australia. McKenna felt that a very comprehensive and powerful group could unite all language education in a seamless way. She says: 'I was doing the national thing, I was trying to bring those groups together'. However, Tout states:

> [A national clearinghouse] did and still exists. It's the Language Australia National Resource Centre (LANRC) and that's what houses all the WELL and ANTA national projects. We may not have promoted it well, but it does exist and it still links to the two other databases in South Australia and Queensland.

McKenna agrees that the national clearinghouse did eventuate as the LANRC, observing that ARIS retains separate branding for each of its products.

From ACFE's point of view, De Natris sees a maturing relationship between ARIS and ACFE. He says that ACFE takes advice from ARIS, and sees that ARIS vision, as well as the Board's vision, may shape ARIS future role. He sees a strong future for ARIS. However, De Natris also thinks that the ACFE sector is changing, being reborn as a more robust sector, and becoming vital in post secondary education. This is a change that he sees will be matched by the resources it requires. De Natris says that ARIS has a role in these changes, which are described for the ACFE sector in *Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities* (Bradshaw, 1997).

3.3.4 Other relationships

ARIS has a range of other organisations with which it has relationships, but Hodge points out that these are not key to understanding how ARIS operates. Nevertheless, these relationships do offer useful insights. They involve networks, which generally rely on informal contacts and a wish to complement each other, rather than be competitive. Although these relationships do not explain how ARIS works, they are often relationships with the people ARIS serves. Interestingly, Evans notes an uneasy relationship with adult education in general, pointing to the vast differences between the general profile of middle class adult education learners and ABE adult learners, who are on the edge of adult further education.

In Victoria, VALBEC and ARIS have enjoyed a complementary relationship since the inception of ARIS. This has worked well for both bodies, as VALBEC has carried the political lobbying role, leaving ARIS free to operate in a non-political way. VALBEC, like ARIS, offers professional development to its membership, however because of the close informal relationships between the two bodies, a cooperative approach to professional development avoids duplication of services. Peak bodies such as VALBEC are very important to ARIS, providing as they do a source of information directly from the field, while ARIS provides a role in the archival of historical documents and materials.

This research has noted that much ALBE provision occurs through TAFE colleges, with some TAFE teachers using the ARIS service. But institutional relationships between TAFE and ARIS do not exist. McKenna explains:

> This is because ACFE holds policy responsibility for adult literacy and numeracy, whereas TAFE colleges are separate identities.

Outside Victoria, ARIS relationship with ALIO have fluctuated somewhat throughout the years, although at times close collaboration existed. An example of one joint project undertaken was the publication of *Numeracy in Focus* (1995), but subsequently, a more competitive environment meant collaboration was not so easy. Shortly before the demise of ALIO, ARIS was looking for a partnership rather than competition with ALIO, and this was demonstrated in the delivery by ARIS of the revised Adult Literacy Teaching course as developed by ALIO.

ARIS relationships with other groups are mostly of an informal nature. ARIS and ALNARC have for the most part enjoyed a good relationship, but nevertheless remain separate, although ARIS has supported a range of ALNARC projects and are ALNARC publishers. Tout explains:

> I think it's an area where if we had more resources I would see it as a possibility that...we could have a more positive role and relationship and sharing of ideas. ...I think there could have been more pro-active cooperation. ...It's very easy to be seen as competitors rather than as collaborators.

With government bodies such as DEST and ANTA, some specific arrangements exist. For example, ARIS houses outcomes of WELL and ANTA projects. However, the relationships are otherwise informal, often based on personal contacts, particularly with ANTA. ARIS has been quite successful over the years in winning contracts from DEST and ANTA for project work.

3.4 ARIS performance

ARIS enjoys a very high reputation for the work it does, and is seen as a very successful organisation. Its current performance is consistently rated highly by interviewees, especially when considered in relation to the environments in which it operates and its financial constraints.

A key factor identified in ARIS success is the quality of ARIS personnel. Interviewees describe them as theoretically sound, reliable, responsive, adaptable, focused, able to tap into the skills of those around them, and with a long term commitment to adult literacy and numeracy and a capacity to build good working relationships. As Kenrick says: 'The key thing is they are fantastic in the field'. De Natris comments that ARIS, as the only organisation of its type in Australia, is both unique and nationally respected. He says that ACFE sees ARIS as a significant contributor to literacy and numeracy, and to adult learning in Victoria, but would like to see more qualitative performance indicators to demonstrate this effectiveness.

Hagston and Tout question their own effectiveness, and feel there are many things they could do much better, although not within the constraints under which they operate. However, Hodge knows that ARIS reputation for high quality and reliable work brings them repeat business, which is important, particularly in regard to successful tendering for project work.

A range of other factors were identified as contributing to ARIS success. In community settings, the human face ARIS provides works well. De Natris believes that ARIS size and structure have been important, and the fact that it is not complicated or highly sophisticated allows ARIS staff to be in touch and understand the practicalities of what they do. Evans points to their educational reliability and honesty and their ability to remain professionally competent as factors in their success, while Wignall believes adaptability has been a crucial factor.

3.4.1 'The Jan and Dave Show'

Interviewees all attribute ARIS success to the personalities involved. ARIS is still very much seen as 'the Jan and Dave show', even though Hagston and Tout are no longer the managers of ARIS. Nevertheless, as has already been documented, it is difficult to separate the success of ARIS, or even the identity of ARIS itself, from Hagston and Tout. Interviewees referred to ARIS as 'they' throughout the interviews.

The years of their commitment have generated a powerful knowledge base and identity for ARIS. However, the reliance of ARIS on two personalities is a double-edged sword: a situation of which Hagston and Tout are very much aware. Hagston explains:

> Even though people may see it as the Jan and Dave show, we actually don't want that. It's a problem. We've always made sure there are other people [around] but the perception is still there.

Tout explains that they have tried to ensure that ARIS is no longer dependent on the two of them. To enable ARIS to be self-sustaining, they have distanced themselves from the day-to-day operation of ARIS. As a result, Hodge was recently appointed to the position of Manager of ARIS, with both Tout and Hagston stepping into other roles: Tout as Regional Manager of Language Australia based out of the Melbourne office, and Hagston as Manager of Research and Projects. Tout says:

> It would be fine [without us], but it's only in the last two or three years because we've moved on...we're really not ARIS now.

Nevertheless, it is also clear that Hagston and Tout are still deeply involved in setting ARIS directions, as evidenced by Hagston saying:

> We wish we had time to do the proper planning and liaison that we should and could do, but we don't. It's on our wish list.

Others do not believe that ARIS is no longer dependent on these two people for its existence. Evans says: 'If Jan and Dave left suddenly, it would be really difficult because there needs to be a succession'. Kenrick agrees, saying: 'If those people left, I would be worried for ARIS'. Wignall adds:

> Without Jan and Dave, well, potentially it could collapse. I think it is still very much to do with their strengths and commitment.

Tout strongly disagrees:

> Both Jan and I feel that for the first time the ARIS operations are operating in a completely new set of hands…there is a new and very experienced team running ARIS. On top of this it has Jan and I still there within the same office, being able to act as support and offer guidance when needed. It is a much more varied and dynamic team than existed when it was just 'the Jan and Dave show'.

It is early days for these changes, and the question remains whether the future of ARIS in its present form would be assured without Hagston and Tout..

Section 4: Current pressures, tensions and changes

Throughout this report, tensions that exist for ARIS have been raised in relation to various aspects of its operations. In this section, some of these tensions are examined to provide insights into some complexities that ARIS faces as it currently operates and faces the future. The pressures examined are financial pressures, tensions relating to ARIS identity, and possible scenarios for the future.

4.1 Financial pressures

Financial pressures have constrained ARIS since it commenced operations. It has always had to live with being poor. To manage with not enough money means not being able to plan for the future; it means finding ways and means of scraping together a bit more money just to survive; and always considering costs as well as the job to be done. It means living permanently on the edge. Financial pressures are threaded throughout ARIS story.

All interviewees identified funding as a source of tension for ARIS. Tout describes this pressure saying:

> The toughest constraint is simply financial, and it's a matter of can we survive, are we going to survive.

Through the early 1990s Language Australia was well funded, and was able to support ARIS, and saw it as its role to do so. But now Language Australia requires all its parts to be profitable, including ARIS. However, Tout finds that the need for ARIS to be self-funding as a small business offers freedoms as well as responsibilities.

The change in Language Australia's financial situation has caused a conflict between ARIS philosophy of free access and the need to be self-supporting. Wignall notes the tensions that exist between meeting funding requirements and meeting the needs of those who are perceived to be ARIS clients. She points to issues around the need to make information available because it is valuable, and doing things to make some money. This is the same tension Hodge refers to as she grapples with the time-consuming task of offering telephone and email advice without charge to clients who come from outside the ACFE area.

The need to tender for ACFE funding to support ARIS core operations is another tension, but without ACFE funding ARIS would not exist in its present form. An outcome of ACFE funding for ARIS is the setting of directions that differ from the ones ARIS would otherwise choose. One example is ARIS small involvement in the VET area. Tout says, 'It is an issue that our funding comes from ACFE, which is not the home of that stuff'.

As Tout explains, there are people in Language Australia who would consider it better from a financial point of view for Language Australia not to tender for ACFE funding:

> We [Language Australia] cover a loss. We have to do a whole lot of other things to support it [ARIS]. A lot of other projects that we [Language Australia] get, support the ARIS function.

An additional financial pressure is the fact that ACFE funding is for short periods varying from one to three years. Hodge notes that this means ARIS regularly has to renegotiate the contract in order to secure the future, in itself a very time consuming task. Tout points out:

> The contract finishes at the end of this year and that could be it. We believe that won't be the case, but it could be ... but we believe that this sort of service is valuable and that we should keep going with it.

The need to do project work to generate income creates its own tensions. McKenna notes how difficult it is to make a profit out of projects, and Hodge points out that it takes a lot of time to chase project work. Project work is exhausting and a huge ARIS effort goes into it. ARIS has to find a balance between the projects they undertake and the core business they do.

4.2 ARIS identity

Since ARIS was first managed by Language Australia, a lack of clarity about ARIS identity has existed. Hagston highlights this issue when she says, 'It depends on what you call ARIS, and that's an issue'.

Answers to questions regarding ARIS identity range from 'ARIS is Jan and Dave' to 'We've stopped worrying about it'. Aspects of ARIS identity are related to its key relationships with Language Australia and ACFE, and in turn, their differing state and national foci. McKenna makes this point when she asks: 'Are you looking at ARIS as a project funded by the Victorian state government or at ARIS as an organisation within Language Australia?' Hagston maintains:

> We stopped worrying about the tension between the fact that we received state funding and Language Australia was national and we just went with it. Yet I think it's been very beneficial [to have the national focus].

Another question about ARIS identity relates to whether ARIS represents Adult Literacy. This lack of clarity is evident from the changing specific focus on adult literacy and basic education to the less clear current focus on 'further education' that has resulted from ACFE changes.

4.3 The future

As the only remaining information service in Australia, the question of ARIS future is crucial.

It is an inescapable conclusion to reach when examining ARIS that there is no clear vision for the future. The people who work for ARIS are the first to admit this. The financial and time pressures they operate under, and sheer exhaustion mean that looking ahead in a considered way does not occur. Hagston says:

> We should be looking at what type of support overall is required for all the different sorts of potential users. Not just teachers or researchers, but teachers, researchers, bureaucrats, administrators – the whole range – to actually do some sensible analysis of what they require to meet needs, and ARIS is one way of meeting those needs. But it just seems there is no big picture thinking about it all and we don't have time to do it all. It would be a nice little project...we need to ask the question: is there a better way of doing it?

Hodge also finds it difficult to plan ahead, and with the survival of ARIS being her main goal, has fears for the future. McKenna points out that there is a danger of ARIS losing relevance, unless it develops a vision for the future, and takes into account current trends.

The question of ARIS survival is of concern. There has hardly been a time in ARIS history when it did not fear for its future, and it appears at this time to be operating in much the same way as it always has. McKenna believes that as long as ACFE and Language Australia support ARIS, it will continue to survive. She points out, however, that Language Australia's own future is far from certain without funding. On the other hand, De Natris sees an increasing role for ARIS in the ACFE sector. Whether this is what ARIS wants remains a

question. Hodge points to ARIS unique and valued collection resource collection as a crucially important plank in ARIS claim for survival.

Some interviewees have raised different issues affecting ARIS future. Says Hodge: 'The future is tricky. I get caught up in the immediate day-to-day things'. McKenna believes that without any full-time staff, there is no one in the organisation in a position to look ahead; and thinks it is crucial that ARIS address this issue, but as Tout explains:

> I am now fulltime, and we have more staff than ever before n the Melbourne office with adult literacy expertise and with a knowledge and understanding of ARIS. One of the main reasons Language Australia is surviving now is because of that expertise which includes ARIS and its ability to plan ahead. The issue is one of time for planning in this crazy hectic world we now work in.

It appears that while ARIS lacks funds, and therefore staff who have the time to develop a vision for the future, the future of ARIS will remain dependent on Hagston and Tout.

Different sectors of the adult literacy and numeracy field see the future for ARIS in different ways. In the further education sector, people hope that ARIS will continue to do what it is doing so well now. Kenrick would like to see ARIS have more responsibility for professional development in the ACFE funded sector, as this is something ARIS does very well, and which is not done so effectively at a regional level. De Natris would also like to see ARIS further involved in shaping professional development, in what he describes as 'reskilling the sector'. He is concerned that the field is becoming deskilled, saying:

> We've made a very low bottom line for teaching and training, and I don't walk away from that statement. We've emptied out our expertise.

De Natris is concerned with what he describes as the 'slippage in the professionalism of the field,' and with the absence of a career path in a casualised workforce.

He is similarly concerned about other needs in the community sector. He says new state government policies could exert more pressure on ARIS, adding additional professional development demands, and further curriculum work. De Natris sees a role for ARIS in leadership and support as the Bracks Government moves to implement its educational goals for Victoria, as outlined in the discussion paper *Knowledge, Innovation, Skills and Creativity* (1991). De Natris describes the ACFE sector as currently undergoing a metamorphosis. He says it is starting to be taken seriously as a very vital part of post-compulsory education in Victoria, and for ARIS this means a leadership role, which needs to be matched by resources. De Natris predicts an increased involvement in VET by the ACFE sector, and a role for ARIS in this.

Some interviewees believe ARIS should broaden its outlook in the future and become more nationally focussed. This remains a complex issue while ARIS lacks clarity about its role as a state or national body, and is an issue ARIS will have to resolve. Hagston knows that Training Packages are part of the future for literacy and numeracy, while noting continued need for general education. Electronic communications and information technology are other trends both Evans and McKenna suggest ARIS needs to take into future account.

In discussing where ARIS future lies, Hodge sees a lack of recognition for the part ARIS plays nationally. The issue of involvement in national VET agendas is an ongoing one raised by several interviewees. Evans expresses the need for ARIS to meet VET challenges, and become more involved in literacy and numeracy in Training Packages. Additionally, McKenna thinks ARIS should be responding to the contexts where literacy and numeracy are

currently found, and that ARIS operations are too narrow and do not include the wide range of practitioners now in VET. Hodge would like to see a national budget to support the national work ARIS already does.

Wignall pulls together the dilemmas, and suggests a way to look to the future, when she says:

> If the model could be found where it could exist under less pressure to be pulled hither and yon by its funding sources, so it could get a clearer picture of either trying to be all things to all people or only a specific thing to specific people, that would be better. It could be either a national resource, tidy up that tension between its affiliations, or a state body...But I think they need to focus on VET as well as the general thing.

Section 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this research has been to examine ARIS as an organisation that continues to provide a support service to the literacy and numeracy field and consider how the findings might support the adult literacy and numeracy field in the future. This conclusion will first consider what has been learnt from ARIS itself, and then will consider the needs of the field at large.

5.1 ARIS: what has been learnt?

The story of ARIS that has been unfolding in this report is a success story, not least because ARIS continues to exist at all. Now that the complexities of operating in current times have been explored, with all the attendant pressures of much government intervention and regulation, conclusions can be drawn that assist in achieving the purpose of the research.

5.1.1 How has ARIS been a success?

It has been a success because unlike all the other similar support organisations in other states, it continues to thrive. It has an active and valued presence in its own state, through its resources and information services, through its professional development initiatives, through its involvement in curriculum development, advisory and project work. At a national level, not all these functions can be carried out from a small centre in one state, but many are: certainly the resourcing and information services are well known and used around Australia. Even professional development is sought from and delivered to organisations in other states experiencing a dearth of offerings. Internationally, ARIS has a presence at adult literacy and numeracy conferences, and itself draws on a range of international material.

5.1.2 What are the factors in ARIS success?

There are a number of factors contributing to its success. Its ACFE funding has been unpredictable and limited, though in retrospect, steady, and its relationship with Language Australia has remained in place. In spite of funding constraints, leading in turn to constraints on time and staffing, it has been able to prioritise its tasks, and to select and develop its areas of strength. What it does, it does very well, and it knows it cannot do everything.

One central reason for this success is undoubtedly the determination and persistence of Hagston and Tout, underpinned by the belief that what they were fighting for was good and worth the effort. There is more than one occasion in the last ten years in which ARIS would not have survived without the level of determination they exhibited. Their determination has seen them survive the funding roller coaster, as well as survive damaging differences in opinions about the fundamental direction ARIS should take. But ARIS has done much more than just survive. It is acknowledged by all to have provided a vital service to the adult literacy and numeracy field, within the constraints of its operation.

Not only did Hagston and Tout's belief in the service they were offering keep ARIS going, but they also had the ability to remove themselves from the day-to-day politics of the field, allowing their philosophies and pedagogies to be influential through the work they were doing. Aligned with this was their ability to keep an ear to the ground, be aware of trends and shifts in the field, and to respond to them. ARIS ability to keep in touch with the parts of the field in which they have been involved has been seen as crucial. They have exhibited soundness in their educational approaches and leadership in the field of adult literacy and numeracy delivery. Their soundness and reliability have been key factors in their success.

5.1.3 Constraints and challenges

Pictures of success are never simple. Through the process of investigation, layers of complexity become evident.

The first complexity addresses the broad political situation. The different directions of the national training agenda and the Victorian state education agenda have been detailed in this report. Nationally, the direction has long been driven by an economic agenda, leading to competency-based education, increasingly delivered through Training Packages by the RTOs. The building of an entire training industry has been the response to this federal direction, with funding to match.

In the meantime, the direction taken by the Victorian further education sector has not been in tune with national developments. This direction has been underpinned by the 1991 ACFE Act, and recently reinforced by the *Transforming Lives, Transforming Communities* document (Bradshaw, 1997). The impact of these policy directions on ARIS is powerful. Because ARIS is the program responsibility of the ACFE sector, and because ACFE has been an important source of funding for ARIS, the directions set by the Victorian Government have been implicit in the work of ARIS. ARIS personnel do not agree with the national push for CBT. Nevertheless they work with it and have tried to make the system work for them, and they see the popularity of the CGEA as evidence of their success in this.

One outcome of Victorian policy factors, including the directions set by the ACFE Act, is that ARIS has been left to the side of national developments. And national developments have been rapid and far-reaching, radically changing the work of practitioners in the adult literacy and numeracy field. Huge programs such as WELL and LANT/LLNT are responses to the federal government's VET direction, and although involved in the LANT/LLNP program, ARIS is otherwise almost absent in VET.

The next complexity relates to ARIS identity. Since ARIS formed an alliance with Language Australia in the early days of its operations, it has always had an identity issue to address. Is it a state service or is it a national service? In many ways ARIS has been able to operate without resolving these issues, as its brief has never been limited to any one sector of the market. But it is an issue that does not go away. As a state service, ARIS finds itself pulled in some new directions by its funding body, which has moved ARIS into the area of adult education. ACFE sees ARIS as part of the general education support system for the community sector, and possibly part of the secondary school sector in the future. But is this good for the development of future services by ARIS? Does ARIS represent the adult literacy and numeracy field? Should it maintain a close focus on adult literacy and numeracy, or should it operate more broadly and risk watering down the work it knows and does best?

Language Australia has pulled ARIS in a national direction, and this is something ARIS has welcomed. However, ARIS does not have the funding or staff to adequately provide a national service, and so carrying out work on a national basis creates enormous tensions. In addition, Language Australia is an organisation that crosses a broad spectrum, involved in the whole breadth of language and literacy, previously in research, and now in the publication work it undertakes. As a result, ARIS finds itself dealing with ESL issues as well as literacy and language issues, though it needs to be recognised that ARIS is not the only organisation that grapples with this issue.

A further related issue is that ARIS identity is so closely linked to Hagston and Tout, though this is something of which they are aware and which they are working to overcome.

There are other complexities that cloud the ARIS picture. Operating without adequate funding, sufficient staff or enough time, means that ARIS is forced to be reactive rather than

proactive in much of what it does. Personnel need to be able to stand to one side and ask themselves about the scope of the job they want to do, about who should be the users, and about where they want to position themselves in the future. The most important question concerns the support needs for the adult literacy and numeracy field in the years ahead: how can they be met, and does ARIS want to do that job? There is no doubt that the multifaceted field that exists, that it is trying to find a new direction, and that it does need support. How to achieve this, and who should do it, is difficult to answer.

5.2 What are the future needs of the adult literacy and numeracy field for professional support?

By examining issues in relation to the operation of ARIS, this report has highlighted some of the needs of the adult literacy and numeracy field, and uncovered suggestions relevant to questions posed by the research: questions about the future of organizations that provide support to the literacy and numeracy field.

The research has shown that ARIS continues to meet a range of needs in supporting the adult literacy and numeracy field, in the ways that have already been described in this report. The field needs the kind of services ARIS offers and it needs quality services, supplied from a sound theoretical base. ARIS services have become increasingly valuable as other sources of information and professional development have diminished in most states.

The research has also shown that the adult literacy and numeracy field needs more support than ARIS can provide. ARIS cannot be all things to all people without substantially more resourcing. Interviewees have identified areas where support services are needed, demonstrating that a wide range of people are still in need of such support. They include new providers in the field, sessional and poorly paid practitioners, and people working in new ways, in new sites or on new modes of delivery. They include people in other states and territories, including rural or remote areas, such as the Northern Territory. In particular, support for literacy and numeracy in Training Packages, and in VET more generally, is clearly a priority.

Whether such a service is to be limited to the adult literacy and numeracy field, or whether it should extend in more directions, remains a question for further debate. ARIS has relationships with providers who serve the further education sector in general, the ESL field, as well as young people who may or may not have left school. The advantages and disadvantages of including these groups in the scope of any support service needs careful evaluation.

The role of keeping, and making accessible, a resource collection, which includes a comprehensive database, is crucial. The need for promoting the ARIS national databases remains and it needs to expand to meet the increasing breadth of provision in Australia. Again, how this might happen, and how it might be best promoted and further developed, is not within the scope of this research.

There is clear evidence that the scope of the field's need for support is national. Much has been lost with the demise of services in other states. This is not to say that it should necessarily be ARIS role to provide a national service. However, an adequately funded mechanism is required to provide such a service, by whatever means it is delivered. Questions need to be asked about the responsibility of a national training agenda to provide a national system of professional support.

This research has demonstrated the ongoing need for adequate professional support for the adult literacy and numeracy field. The vital issues of what shape this support should take, what funding it should have, and where responsibility for funding lies, remain.

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ANTA: http://www.anta.gov.au

ARIS: http://www.aris.com.au

Certificates of General Education: http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/language-australia/cgea/

DETYA: http://www.detya.gov.au

Language Australia: http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/language-australia

NCVER: http://www.ncver.edu.au

Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment (Victorian Government): http://www.ette.vic.gov.au

Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks: http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/policy3.htm

Appendix 1

Overview of information services around Australia

A brief history of adult literacy and numeracy information services in New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland follows. These examples provide a flavour of what has happened around Australia regarding this aspect of work in the adult literacy and numeracy field. Representatives from all states were invited to contribute to this section of this research report. The following are the responses received.

New South Wales

In NSW for 20 years from the late 1970's the literacy, numeracy and language fields were strengthened by the powerful presence and services of the Adult Literacy Information Office (ALIO). ALIO was originally a literacy referral and resource centre that also trained volunteer tutors. It was a distinct entity located within TAFE NSW, with running costs funded by TAFE, and responsible to all adult literacy providers. More recently it became a professional development centre for NSW, developing curricula and carrying out national projects, with Federal funding, while continuing its role as a referral centre. As a distinct entity ALIO was closed in late 1999.

The origins of ALIO can be traced to the establishment of the first individual learning centre in the NSW TAFE sector in 1976. The rationale for such a centre was to provide access to TAFE education for those adults who had not attained a School Certificate (then the minimum school leaving qualification). By the end of 1977 three adult literacy programs had been set up in regional. A defining event was the national Conference of the Australian Association of Adult and Community Education (AAACE) in 1977, at which ACAL was formed. Those involved from NSW included people from the Board of Adult Community Education (ACE), Adult Migrant English Service (AMES) and TAFE, together with other community groups and all three groups began offering adult literacy courses. The notion of a central referral service for all providers was born out of the overwhelming number of enquiries about programs received by the adult literacy officers in TAFE and other centres. .

Four stages in the evolution of ALIO can be identified, growing out of the broader national changes in education and training policies and funding strategies:

Stage I	1980 - 1987	Origins	...the early period, volunteer tutors were the focus of the activities
Stage II	1987 - 1991	Extension of funding and support	...national funding, not tagged to particular projects, allowed creative activities to emerge from the field, along with growing professionalisation.
Stage III	1991 – 1993	Relating to the Training Reform Agenda	...the Federal Adult Language and Literacy Policy offers more funding, tagged by Federal Government for more utilitarian ends, including work-related literacy
Stage IV	1993 – 1999	Professionalisation of ALIO	...the focus is on running national language, literacy and numeracy programs, and tendering for national projects; hundreds of thousands of dollars pass through the coffers.

Its four core functions over the twenty years were referral of students, provision of information, development and provision of resources, and the professional development of

teachers. It also acted as a strong network for practitioners in the field, a hub of activity and ideas. As it changed in response to wider changes, tensions arose, particularly in relation to processes of tendering. For example, marketisation - specifically tendering for literacy programs - and service to all providers were contradictions. ALIO was disbanded at the end of 1999, and its functions taken over by NSW TAFE Access Division. The hub that was so important to the Adult Basic Education field in NSW has not been replaced.

Western Australia

Western Australia's support service for literacy and numeracy arose from the TAFE Adult Literacy Services Unit, which operated a statewide volunteer tutor literacy scheme. Supported by federal funding from the ALLP, the unit expanded to conduct a range of activities, including workplace literacy provision, research and curriculum projects. The unit was renamed the Adult Literacy Services Bureau (ALSB), and sat alongside other equity bureaux under the state Department of Vocational Education and Training.

At its peak it employed approximately thirty staff involved in the above activities, and in addition it had an information, resource and professional development role. However, in 1994, the Department devolved some of the operations to TAFE colleges, but ALSB continued to coordinate policy, research, professional development, curriculum development and moderation for CGEA. Its extensive resource collection was broken up. In 1998, all bureaux were closed as part of a policy to 'mainstream equity'. The manager joined the (now) Department of Training's Access and Participation Directorate as one of five equity consultants who had state-wide responsibility for policy development and implementation. There was no longer a centre for advice, consultancy, professional development or resource assistance, and other mechanisms for support have not been sustained.

In 2001, the Department of Training disbanded the Access and Participation Directorate and placed the Literacy Consultant in a curriculum accreditation and policy unit. Although the Department continues to fund the volunteer tutor program, CGEA coordination unit and Innovative Curriculum Projects, professional development for adult literacy and numeracy teachers is limited to a few forums and conferences, often interstate. There is no centralised resource centre, so many practitioners take advantage of the ARIS resource database, and ARIS service is seen as an essential support mechanism for WA literacy and numeracy program managers and teachers. Web-based professional development and resources are becoming more important.

Queensland

The history of an information service in Qld was brief. In Queensland the fledgling adult literacy programs came under the auspices of Adult Education Extension Officers and later, when Adult Education joined Technical Education as TAFE, adult literacy programs were administered by Education Officers within TAFE Operations Branch.

During this time adult literacy was one of a number of access and equity programs. While the state government employed a small number of 'technical' teachers as remedial teachers offering literacy and numeracy support, all other adult literacy teachers were dependent on Commonwealth funds for their programs. There were no formal policies on adult literacy until 1990, when Commonwealth funding initiatives meant a slight improvement with the formation of the Access Education branch, with responsibility for the delivery of adult literacy provision through the Literacy Services Unit (LSU). In 1990 an embryonic coordinating and information service, Adult Literacy and Information Service (ALIS), was developed within the LSU. It offered advice about funding allocation, and had considerable

influence on the ways in which TAFE adult literacy services were provided across the state.
influence on the ways in which TAFE adult literacy services were provided across the state.

ALIS was particularly important in 1990, International Literacy Year (ILY). It was a point of contact for the representatives coordinating Queensland's aims for ILY. It acted as a clearinghouse for ILY publications and arranged other ILY events and projects in Queensland. At the end of 1990 ALIS moved to the Language and Literacy Centre, providing physical proof of the state government's commitment to adult literacy. It was the high point for the field of adult literacy in Queensland. However, due to changing government policy which involved the separation of policy advisers from the implementation of programs, while at the same time adopting a policy of decentralisation or regionalisation, adult literacy personnel became redistributed. As a result, 1992 saw the demise of the Centre for Language and Literacy. At the same time the coordinating role of ALIS was lost, and while there was an Access and Equity unit with an executive officer, the service disappeared.

It should be noted that in Queensland the role lives on in the form of regional language, literacy and numeracy networks, supported by Regional Executive Officers. Following a review of adult literacy policy and implementation in Queensland, in 1995 the Queensland Adult English Language Literacy and Numeracy Council (QAELLN) was established as an advisory council to the state training board. This council was supported by regional networks which not only provided advice but also to some extent took on the role of providing professional development in the regions.

Appendix 2

Background of the interviewees

A short biography of each and their involvement with ARIS follows.

Dave Tout

Dave Tout was part of the team that produced the reports recommending the formation of ARIS, working with Daryl Evans and others. He is a well-known numeracy educator, and has extensive experience in curriculum development, coordination, management and policy development. He shared the ARIS coordination position with Jan Hagston from its inception in 1990 till 2001. Although he is no longer in that position, he is closely involved with ARIS through his role as Manager of Language Australia, which is co-located with and manages ARIS.

Previously he was involved in community education at the Malvern Learning Exchange in the 1970s. He began his teaching career as a high school maths teacher, and moved into TAFE in 1978.

Tout is currently also the Manager of the Publications and Clearinghouse Unit, Language Australia. In this role, he coordinates and manages the wide range of publications produced through Language Australia and the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, Victoria, including a range of regular journal and newsletters, as well as printed books and resources and Internet sites. (www.aris.com.au)

Jan Hagston

Jan Hagston was appointed as ARIS Coordinator, sharing the position with Dave Tout, in 1989. She continued in this position till 2001, when she became the Manager of Research and Projects, Victorian Office, Language Australia. This is the position she currently holds.

She is currently involved on two projects. One is developing a website to help adults and adolescents develop literacy and numeracy; the other is analysis of Australian data from the International Adult Literacy Survey.

She has extensive experience in adult education, having worked in the sector for nearly twenty years. Her experience covers research, teaching, delivering professional development, curriculum and materials development and lecturing. She has considerable experience of project management. In particular, she has managed projects related to the CGEA.

Previously, her teaching experience included high school and TAFE college teaching.

Robyn Hodge

Hodge started work in the field of Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) in 1992, after teaching for ten years. She became an ALBE coordinator in a community centre, and through ACFE became an ARIS user. ARIS provided her with her first contacts within the field, and with much needed resources and networks. For five years she worked in as coordinator and teacher of Certificate of Spoken and Written English (CSWE) and Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA), and encouraged other teachers to use ARIS services.

Hodge is currently the Manager of ARIS. She first worked at ARIS in 1998, as an Education Officer. In 2001 she was appointed manager of ARIS, when Hagston became Project Manager, a position she continues to hold. In her role as Manager of ARIS, she supports the staff of ARIS, reports to Tout as manager of Language Australia, and is responsible for

professional development programs, and the support of good practice in further education in Victoria.

Daryl Evans

Daryl Evans played a major role in the original concept of ARIS. He was part of the planning team who published the three-volume report in 1990 *Adult literacy and Basic Education into the 1990s*, where a plan for provision of Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) in Victoria was set out. This plan included the concept of ARIS.

Evans was involved in community education from the 1970s, when he had been part of a group setting up the Learning Exchange, grounded in notions of Freire and part of the Whitlam era, with a very intensive hands-on involvement in the community sector. He began his time in ALBE in Footscray College of TAFE, where some of the earliest ALBE programs in Victoria began. This involvement led to his notion of an ARIS that worked collaboratively with the ALBE field, and supported the regional offices of the then Department of Further Education (DFE).

Evans currently is head of Department, Adult Literacy and Work Education at Victoria University where he heads over one hundred staff over eleven campuses. His own staff members are often ARIS users.

Rosa McKenna

McKenna began her involvement in the adult literacy field in1978, as coordinator of Tottenham Technical Community School, with one of the first adult literacy programs in Victoria. Based in a community house environment, it became an adult literacy project, and she was employed through the Victorian Adult Literacy and Basic Education Council (VALBEC). She then became attached to one of the TAFE regions, as regional coordinator. When three regional coordinators were appointed by the DFE, McKenna was one, funded by the Victorian Government. As the work became bureaucratised, McKenna became attached to DFE regional councils, and then became part of the bureaucracy of the DFE as an adult literacy appointment.

Her involvement with ARIS began when she was Manager of the Victorian office of Language Australia, then known as the National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA), following its restructure and removal to premises outside the bureaucracy. Because ARIS was located within Language Australia, this meant she also became the manager of ARIS.

Currently McKenna is the manager of Communication in Education and Training P/L (Commet). Commet is a specialist consultancy company providing a range of services to the vocational eduction and training sector, industry and government agencies in the areas of adult literacy and numeracy, workplace communication, assessment, instructional design and staff training.

Robin Kenrick

Kenrick is currently co-President of VALBEC. She has worked in the language and literacy field for more than fifteen years. She has been a user of ARIS for many years, and has also worked on ARIS projects, in particular the reaccreditation of the CGEA. She is currently a manager of the Kew Neighbourhood House, managing a wide range of projects, making her current role a wider one than literacy and numeracy programs. When ARIS first commenced operations she immediately became a user, finding that ARIS met her resource needs. For her ARIS has remained a valuable service and one she informs teachers in her centre about and encourages them to use.

Peter de Natris

De Natris is currently Manager, Performance and Planning for Adult and Community Further Education (ACFE). He works for the public arm of the ACFE Board that funds many of the ARIS activities, and is the major funding source for ARIS.

His initial relationship with ARIS was as a user, as a new teacher in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and TAFE. He found ARIS to be invaluable. It met his needs in regard to literacy and numeracy teaching, for example: methodology, materials, resources and as a place to put forward theories and ideas. As a new teacher from a vocational background, it was a very important part of his support structure.

Louise Wignall

Wignall is currently a Senior Project Officer with the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). She previously worked at the (then) Council for Adult Education (CAE). Early in the 1990s she used ARIS materials. In 1993 she set up a literacy program in St Kilda Library, and received support from ARIS. She became a user of CGEA and her awareness of ARIS grew. She joined the ARIS project team as an education officer for the reaccreditation of CGEA to work on its redevelopment. She also wrote articles and became editor for ARIS publications, then became an educational officer with ARIS, moving to a resource and information officer role.

In her work with the ANTA, ARIS remains a one-stop shop for ALBE materials, with a unique database. It holds Workplace Enlgish Language and Literacy (WELL) and ANTA reports, which is important for ANTA. She has informal contacts with ARIS personnel for the expertise they offer in the literacy and numeracy area.

Appendix 3

The following is the research information and questions, distributed to interviewees prior to interview.

Research focus

The purpose of this research is to examine the role of ARIS, as an organisation that provides a service to the adult literacy and numeracy field, and the factors that influence its role, its effectiveness and its sustainability.

The research will be conducted through interviews with people who have been involved with ARIS – setting it up, funding it, working there, or using its services. The interviews will review the history of the organisation to trace patterns and influences, as well as investigate current arrangements and issues..

This study is part of a bigger project designed to identify factors that lead to effective support organisations for the provision of adult literacy and numeracy. It is funded by ALNARC.

Questions for interview

Perhaps we could begin by talking about your own **involvement with ARIS**. What role do/did you play in the organisation? (get specific descriptive info - dates employed, nature of involvement eg staff or ex-staff/ funder/user/manager/other) (probe questions selected accordingly)

- How did you come to work at ARIS and how did it fit **your previous lit/numeracy** experience?
- What were the circumstances that led to your organisation becoming a/the funding body for ARIS?
- How long have you been a user of ARIS? What are the main services you use?

- What is your understanding of the **pressures or conditions that led to the creation of ARIS**? (When was it set up? Who by? Why? What was happening in the policy arena – in the state, nationally?)
- What do/did you see as the **core business** of ARIS? Has the **core business changed** over time? In what way? Why?
- Who do you see as the **main users** of ARIS? Has that changed?
- **Language Australia and ACFE** have been key to ARIS. What have their roles been and how have they influenced the work ARIS does?
- Are there **other institutional or organisational relationships** that are key to understanding how ARIS works? (eg VALBEC, TAFE, ACAL, government departmental structures in Victoria, ANTA ...)
- How is ARIS **funded**? Has that changed over time, and if so how, and why? (Details: what are the funds for... staff? Resources? Premises? Who funds it? How much ?)
    - how have these funding arrangements influenced the work of ARIS? Have they been a strength or a weakness of the organisation?

- How many staff are/were employed? What sort of resources have been built up?

- What would you say were some central values or underlying ideas about learning and teaching or literacy and numeracy that informed the work of staff at ARIS?
    - How **have these changed** over the years? (probe the themes: volunteer/professionals; student culture; sectors - who pays and who gains; changing conceptualisations that shaped the literacy field.)
- I would like to stand back a little and look at the broader policy framework within which ARIS does its work. Can you identify **policy changes in the field of literacy and numeracy** that have influenced the direction of ARIS?
- What are the **current pressures** (financial, political, others you can think of) that are impacting on the performance of ARIS? In what way are these manifested?
- How would you evaluate the **current performance** of ARIS?
- What factors do you think have led to the **success of ARIS** to date?
- What about the **future**? Are other places or organisations doing the things that ARIS does? What would you like to see happen that would enhance the service that ARIS provides in meeting adult literacy and numeracy needs?

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